

A
POSING QUESTION,

P U T

By the Wise man, *viz.* SOLOMON, to
the Wisest men.

Concerning making a JUDGMENT of
TEMPORAL CONDITIONS.

WHEREIN YOU HAVE

The Ignorance of Man (in knowing, What is
Good, or Evil, for man in this Life) DISCO-
VERED; Together, with the Mistakes that
flow from it: And the great Question RESOL-
VED, *viz.* Whether the Knowledge of, What is
Good for a man in this Life, be so hid from
Man, that no man can attain it.

Preached at the Weekly Lecture at *Upton*
upon *Severn*, in the County of *Worcester*, by
BENJAMIN BAXTER, late Minister of
the Gospel there.

Eccles. 9. 1. No man knoweth either Love or Hatred, by
what is before him.

Eccles. 5. 13. There is a sore Evil I have seen under the Sun,
namely, Riches, Kept for the Owners thereof to their Hurt.

Psal. 119. 71. It is good for me that I have been Afflicted.

LONDON,
Printed for *George Sawbridge*, at the Signe of
the Bible on *Ludgate-Hill*.

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To the much
HONOUR'D,
AND TRULY
VERTUOUS,
M^{rs}. *PENELOPE LECHMERE*;
Wife to Nicholas Lechmere, of
HANLY-CASTLE, Esq;

Madam,



Nothing is more usual, then for those, who write Books, to Dedicate them to some Person or other: So it's as usual with those that do it, to make known to the World, the Reason of such their Dedication; and, Why to such a Person.

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Among other reasons, none are more frequently alleadged, then Eminent Favours received. *Madam*, If I would make these the Reasons of my Dedicating this Book to you, it were sufficient to satisfy any, Why I have pitched upon you, rather then upon another. I could tell the World, What a great Debtor you have me to you, especially in this day, wherein the Hand of the Lord hath been, and still is, very heavy upon me: You have been a Nurse, and very much of a Physitian to me; You have ministred to my Necessities; You have often cheared me with your Visits; Yea, you left not, till you had found out, an Able and Eminent Physitian, and brought him to me, under whose hands I at present am, waiting upon God for the Issue. Certainly, these are Favours that are not to be forgotten; and might very well be alleadged, as
the

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the Reason of my Dedicating this inconsiderable Piece to you. But, *Madam*, under favour, I must tell you and the world, that this Dedication, neither respecteth, nor relates to, any of these. The only Reason, is, truly this, That there is none, can claim such an Interest in the Book, as your self; and if it be worth seeing the Light, you must be thanked for it. You were the Person, who, for some years last past, did with much importunity, solicit me to the Printing and Publishing of these Sermons; You rested not, till you had obtained a promise from me, of doing it; When my Copy was finished, you were impatient till it were sent to the Press; and when it was in the Press, in all your inquiries after it, you were pleased to stile it by the Name of *Your Book*. So many wayes have you been pleased to make it your own, that I

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should have wronged you very much; if I should have denied you, the right you have to it. And now *Madam*, having given you this accompt of the Reason of my Dedicating this Book to you, I shall next give you, a brief accompt of the Book it self. It Treats of a Subject, which few or none (that I know of) have written of, (I mean) so as to make it the sole Subject, of a full and just Discourse. It is a Subject, that Universally respecteth all, of what Degree or Quality soever, High and Low, Rich and Poor, yea, the Highest, and the Lowest; The King that Sits upon the Throne, and the Beggar that sits upon the Dung-hill. GOD, The Great Founder, and Framers of Conditions, hath not made all men, equal and alike in respect of Stature, (*Saul*, was taller than the people, by the head and shoulders) no more hath he made all equal, in

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respect of their outward and temporal Condition. Some he setteth upon Mountains, and placeth others in the Vallies: And, when He pleaseth, He bids some that were set on High, Come down from your Mountains, and sit below; as He did *Job*: And others that sit Below, He bids sit up Higher. Thus Providence delighteth many times, to make men change places, and to poure them from Vessel to Vessel, (I mean) out of one condition into another. The great thing we have to do in every Condition, is, (so far as is possible) to enquire into it, Whether it be Good for us or no. Here is the great mistake of men, that they look no further than on the Surface and outside of their Condition; and if they find that to be Gawdy and Glistring, in their own eyes, They presently say, as those Disciples did in another case, *It is*

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good for us to be here. As on the contrary, If the outside of their condition seemeth Ugly and Deformed, they presently conclude, it's Evil for them to be in that condition. The scope of this Book, is to rectify these mistakes, by teaching us to View the inside, as well as the outside of a condition; by setting us seriously upon searching out (so far as it may be known of us, letting the hidden mysteries of Providence alone) What the minde and meaning of God towards us, in every condition, is. In a word, the scope of it, is likewise this, To teach men, so to improve their temporal conditions, as to make them advantagious to them, in relation to an Eternal one. Ere-long, temporal Conditions shall be no more, with their Differences and Distinctions, of High and Low, Rich and Poor: But all Men and Women, shall

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shall be put into one and the same Condition, of Misery, or Glory; and shall be, there, fixed to all Eternity. The Lord keep us, from losing our selves in our Earthly Conditions, so as not to eye that Condition that is Heavenly: That while we lie sucking sweetness, out of the gawdy Flowers of a Condition, we forget not to consider, What our Condition will be hereafter; into which, ere long, all of us shall be Translated.

Madam, The Book I present you with, is coming into the World; when the Author, is, in all probability, going out of it. Be pleased to accept of it, as a poor Legacy bequeathed to you, by a Dying man; who yet, while he liveth, must Subscribe himself,

MADAM,

Feb. 21.
1661.

*Your very much obliged
Servant,*

BEN. BAXTER.

TO THE
READER.

Christian Reader,

I Have a Concurrence
of many Reasons, to
make me willing to
commend this Book,
to thy thankful Ac-
ceptance, and diligent
Perusal.

I. In *General*, Good
Books are now of grea-
ter use, than sometime formerly they have
been: So many Congregations are Desti-
tute of Able Faithful Teachers, that Books
are the more necessary; and are now, an
unvaluable Mercy to this Land. It is one
instance, in which the Doctrine of this Trea-
tise hath been Verified to my self. I once
was tempted to *Repent*, that I had written
so much my self, and to blame others that
did imitate me, and trouble the world with
such

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such a crowd of Books: But God told not me; what Changes He would make: And *who knoweth what is good for man*, when Providence concealeth much that is necessary to the Determination. Little thought I, That God was so suddenly removing so many faithful Guides, and bringing thousands into such a case, in which, Books must be their most learned, able, powerful Teachers! O what a mercy is it, that even the Poor, may keep such *Preachers* in their houses, at so cheap a rate! That at Home, they may thus have an *excellent Sermon* when they please! That they may (yet) without Penalties, hear these *silent Preachers*, that are Orthodox, Methodical, Impartial, not bending to the Lusts, and Carnal Interests of Men: That at home, you may hear a Preacher that will not flatter you, nor raise at those, that are not for the Interest of a Faction; nor by a beastly debauched Life, unsay his Doctrine: That by reading *more or less*, you may avoid the offence, of the *length or shortness* of the *Sermon*: That you may choose the Subject, most pertinent to your case, and the Discourse that for the manner is most suited to your Edification! That when you cannot come to a Powerful Preacher, you may, at any time, read a heart-

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warming book: That when you want understanding and expression, prudently to instruct your Families, and exhort your near Relations; or your Neighbours, you may read to them, or lend them, a Book that is best suited to their State. I think, Much of the work of God in *England*, for mens Conversion, Confirmation, and Consolation, is now to be carried on by *Books*.

And though I know some get them, but as *Hangings* or *Pictures*, to Adorn their Rooms, (*ut Petrarch.*) *Alii voluptati, alii jactantiae libros querunt; sunt qui hac parte supellectilis exornant thalamos, quae animis ornandis inventa est, neque aliter his utuntur quam Corinthii vasis, & tabulis pictis, ac statuis, &c.*) yet, when they are extant, who knoweth whose hands they may fall into: And how many by such Books, as unexpectedly have fallen into their hands, have bin brought to true Repentance and Salvation.

And it is a great Mercy, that we have such a multitude of Books, that all agree in the *necessary unquestionable Truths* of our Religion; when it is a thing so dangerous to read Books against Books, Errors against Truth; and [*Libri quosdam ad scientiam, quosdam ad insaniam perduxere*]
some

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some are made *Wise*, and some made *Mad*, by reading Books: And when diversity, and contrariety, so distract men, as abundance of Cross-ways do a Traveller. (*ut Petr.*) *Fallit sæpe viarum multiplicitas viatorem; et qui uno calle certus ibat, hæret in bivio; multoque major trivii est error, aut quadrivii: sic sæpe qui librum unum efficaciter elegisset, inutiliter multos apernit evoletque.*)

The Papiſts remedy againſt the hurt of ill Books, is to deny us the uſe of *good ones*: Their remedy againſt the miſcheifs of *errors*, is to keep men without knowledg of the Truth; and to cure ſquinting to put out our eyes: To eſcape the danger of *miſunderſtanding* the Scriptures, to keep them from *underſtanding* them, and to lock them up in an unknown Tongue, and to fly from them, becauſe, they are abuſed by Hereticks: As if Chriſt ſhould not have ſaid *again*, [*It is Written*] becauſe, the Devil had ſaid, [*It is Written*]. But of the *two* Evils, the Vanity is more tolerable, of them that glory in their excellent *Libraries*; or of *Sabinus*, in *Seneca*, that boaiſted of his *learned Servants*; or the Great Men, that glory in their learned *Chaplains*, while they are ignorant *themſelves*; than
the

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the Villany of *Licinius*, that called *learning*, The Pest and Poison of the Common-Wealth: Or the Italian Noble Man that *Petrach* mentioneth, that

Fuit nuper, non in agris,
nec in sylvis, sed in maxi-
ma, florentissimaque, et
(quod stupeas) urbe Italiae,
neque is Pastor, aratorve,
sed vir nobilis, magnique
apud cives suos loci, qui
juravit se magno pretio
empturum, nequis unquam
suam patriam literatus in-
traret: O vox faxei pecto-
ris! Petr. Perhaps it was
some Pope of Rome.

would give a very great
summe of mony, to keep
all men of Learning,
from ever coming into
his Country; Or the
impiety of them, that
would banish the know-
ledg of the Scriptures,
from the laity in the
Church of God.

2. And from the matter and manner of
this *Treatise*, I have more special Reasons
to take the publication of it for a Mercy.
The *Subject* is very *suitable* and *seasonable*
in these times, when Providence sporteth
it self in the affairs of men, and puzzeleth
so many, and is so *variously* interpreted by
the *best*, and *misinterpreted* by the *most*.
This Doctrine of *mans uncertainty of what*
is for his good, in the matters of temporal
concernment, or of the *disengaged Provi-*
dence of God, is not any where else so ful-
ly and methodically handled that I know of.
And it is of very great use, to the correct-
ing of many, and great miscarriages, and the

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the right ordering of our *affections* and *employments* in the world. How unreasonable is it, That we should be so eager and peremptory in our desires of that, which we *know not*, Whether it will do us *good* or *hurt*. That we should be so passionately troubled, for those passages of God's Providence, which, for ought we know, may be the means of our felicity. O how oft do we *foolishly trouble our selves*, because *God is saving us* from greater trouble, and we do not understand His meaning! Strange! that the knowledg of our *nothingness*, and the experience of the *fruits* of our miscarriages, will not yet perswade us, to give God leave to Govern the World, without our meddling, or seeking to take his Work into our hands, and censuring of that, which we never understood! That we have not yet enough, of the desire of *being as gods*; having smarted for it, as we have done! O the folly of those Expositors of the Prophecies of Scripture, who first *overvalue a prosperous state*, and conclude beyond their knowledg, that it is *best for us*; and then reduce the Promises to their sense; and grow so confident in their expectations, of outward deliverances and prosperous times, as to lay their hopes and
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comforts on it, and the very credit of Religion it self! And o the madness of those men, that laying this as their ground work, that fleshly Prosperity is best for them, are unreconcilable to the wayes of Faith and Holiness, and Mortification, because they square not with this Erroneous Foundation.

These Generalls we are certain of; *First*, That ordinarily Adversity, is more profitable to the Soul, then worldly Prosperity. *Secondly*, That all things shall work together for good, to them that love God. And therefore we have reason to be *most suspicious* of Prosperity; but, if we are true Christians, to interpret all well that is of God.

Did we but know what need we have of *mortifying Providences*, as the ordinary means of *mortifying Grace*, we should rightlier judg of them, then we do. *Tanto quisque ferramentum medici patientius tolerat, quanto magis putridum conspicit esse quod secat.*] Saith Greg. He that best knowes the rottenness of the flesh, will best endure the *Surgeons knife*. And happy are we, if that be cured by the pain of the flesh, which was corrupted by the pleasure of the flesh: [*Si quæ carnis delectatione peccamus, carnis dolore purgamus:*] Mar-

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Marvel not, if, when thou turnest unto Christ, thou seemest to be assaulted with successive Waves, and to be cast into a Furnace, or brought into a Thorny Wilderness, and compassed with Sorrows, which thou never wast acquainted with before: As *Augustine* to his friend, [*Noli admirari frater, si, postquam Christianus effectus es, mille te undique tribulationes vexant: Quoniam Christus nostræ Religionis caput est; nosque ejus membra sumus; debemus ergo non solum eum, sed ejus vitam cumulatissime sequi.*] Christ's way, must be our way; we must be conformed to our Head: We must suffer with him, if we will be glorified with him: The Cross, is the passage to the Crown. The Armies of Saints, have gone this way in all Generations. [*Similes aliorum respice casus—Mitius ista feres.*] *Or.* Should we expect that Grace should have no Conflict, no Conquest before the Triumph; but be Crown'd, before we have shewed what it can do? Nay, we know not the power of it in our selves, till it be tried. [*Nemo scit, quid potueris; neque tu quidem ipse: Opus enim est ad suam notitiam experimento: Quid quisque possit, non nisi tentando didicit, inquit Seneca.*]

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Be not therefore too unmannerly, and foolishly importunate with God for any outward thing, till thou not only thinkest that at the present it would do thee good, but also canst see as far as to the end, and say, That it will be *in the issue good*, and will not *cross* any greater Good. And marvel not, if God grant not such mistaking Prayers. *Non audit medicus ad voluntatem, sed ad sanitatem*, saith August.

What sickly tempers should we be of, yea, what certain death would follow, if our Father and Physitian, should dyet us as we desire, and give us what we would have our selves? It seems a hard saying of *Augustine*, of Rich men; *Difficile, imo impossibile, est, ut presentibus et futuris quis fruatur Bonis: ut hic ventrem, et ibi mentem impleat; ut à deliciis ad delicias transeat; ut in utroque seculo primus sit; ut in terra et in cælo appareat gloriosus: It is hard, yea impossible, to enjoy both present and future Goods: to satisfy the belly here, and the mind hereafter; to passe from pleasures unto pleasures: to be a chief man in both worlds; to be glorious both in Earth and in Heaven.* But it meaneth no more than Christ meant, in *Luk. 16. 25. & 18. 25.*

O how great a Victory do they get, that
over.

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overcome the temptations of Prosperity.
*Magnæ virtutis est cum felicitate luctari;
et magnæ felicitatis est à felicitate non vin-
ci: Aug.* How few are so happy, who have
that which the world counteth happiness,
as to escape its sting, and the everlasting
misery, which living after the flesh will pro-
cure, *Rom. 8. 1, 13.*

*Hec cæcæ mentes, tumefactaque corda
secundis!*

This maketh the Great ones of the world,
to be the Object of grief and compassion
to the Wise, and cloudeth their Honour,
and maketh them usually esteemed the mi-
serablest men alive, because they are usual-
ly the worst; through the Surfeits which they
take from worldly fulness, and the aliena-
tion of their minds from God and Heaven,
through the prevalence of fleshly pleasures:
For he is the worst man, that is most Earth-
ly and least Heavenly; that hath most of
the World, and least of God upon his heart:
Especially, when the Leprosy of the most
brutish Sensuality, and stinking Lusts, and
drunken Pride, and savage Cruelty, are
the Symptoms of this Pernicious Di-
sease.

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Luxuriant animi rebus plerumque secundis

Saith *Lactantius*, *Ex Prosperitate oritur luxuria; ex luxuriâ verò, vitia omnia: sic impietas adversus Deum nascitur.*] *Luxurie springeth from Prosperity, and all Vices from Luxurie: And thus impiety against God is generated.*

And it frequently maketh the Prosperous so Drunk, that they need no other enemy: their Disease destroyeth them, they reel unto their Ruine. Saith *Seneca*, *Res est inquieta Fœlicitas, ipsa se exagitat, movet cerebrum: non uno genere alios in aliud irritat. Et alibi: Multarum urbium in ipso flore luxuriosa imperia ceciderunt, et quicquid virtute paratum erat, intemperantiâ corrui.*

Seeing then that worldly prosperity is usually so pernicious, and we can never say before hand, That it is for our good: How unmeet is it, that we should inordinately desire it, or think we are undone when adversity is our lot? Why seek we that fullness or greatness, which hath, as *Augustine* speaks, *Asperitatem veram, jucunditatem falsam, certum dolorem, incertam voluptatem, durum laborem, timidam quietem;*
rem

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rem plenam miseriae, spem beatitudinis inanem: That is, a true asperity, a false delight; a certain pain, an uncertain pleasure; a hard labour, a fearful rest; a business full of misery; and a hope that is empty of true felicity.] And, as a leaf, it shakes with every wind: Internal Gripes, External Rumors; and a thousand Accidents, turn their seeming Paradise into a Hell: *Adeo perexigua sunt, quae fortunatissimis summam beatitudinis detrahunt*, saith Seneca. For, as he saith in another place, *Felicissimi cujusque delicatissimus est sensus, et, nisi ad nutum cuncta suppetant, omnis adversitatis insolens, minimis quibusque prosternitur*. The most prosperous, have a delicate sense, and, if all things be not at their beck, being unused to all Adversity, they are cast down with every trifle.

3. And I am the more inclined to this Recommendation, for the Reverend Author's sake: God threatneth by Sicknesse, to call him hence; and therefore, that he may Preach to *many*, when he is removed from a *few*, and silenced in the dust; is that honour to his Name, and that benefit to Men, which I gladly would Promote. He is an Orthodox, Sober, Peaceable, Divine; that never interested himself, with

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any thing like a Faction: An excellent and most Methodical Preacher, whose labour is better in the Pulpit, then in the Press: I have oft heard him, and scarce ever heard a Sermon from him, which I thought not worthy to be published: No, not when he began to Preach, (about 26. years ago). Many such Humble, Godly, able faithful Labourers, I had the happinesse to be a Neighbour to, in the County where he liveth. In the *matter* and *style* of this Book, you may trulier know, than from the Reports of Malice, what Sedition, what Faction, what Schism or Heresy they Preached: for it was such as this, so far as I was acquainted. O happy *England*! That hath more Able, Powerful, Laborious Preachers to spare and lay aside, than any other Nation that I hear of in the world, proportionably doth enjoy. Now, *be that hath an ear to hear, let him hear. Tet a litte while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth*, John 13. 35.

Your Companion, in the hope
and patience of Believers,

March 14.
1661.

Rich. Baxter.

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1. To find out, What an Affliction comes in Order to.
2. To set in with the Affliction, and to further it in the work, for which it is sent.
3. To eye our Passions and Affections, more than our Afflictions.
4. To eye our Sins, more than our Sufferings.

Five things to move us to it.

5. To keep our Hearts open Heaven-ward.
6. To keep the Ear open to Counsel.
7. Framing the Heart, to a Pious Submission to God.
8. Laying the Affliction to heart.

A two-fold laying Affliction to heart.

1. Carnal, sinful, hurtful.
2. Spiritual, holy, helpful.

9. Pati-

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9. Patient Waiting { On God.
For God.
10. Making all out of God, that we need in that Condition.

CHAP. XII.

2. What do you make of an Afflicted Condition :

Affliction is, 1. God's Furnace, to { Melt.
Refine.

2. God's School. { Book.
In a School, there is a { Rod.

Affliction is God's Rod, to beat somewhat { Into us.
Out of us.

Five Queries, concerning what Instructions, Afflictions have Sealed.

3. Affliction is God's Plough.

The work of the Plough, shewed in 3. Particulars.

4. Afflictions are God's Physick.

What kind of Physick, shewed in 3. Particulars.

CHAP. XIII.

Quest. What Counsel and Direction to be given, concerning the Choosing or Refusing Conditions.

Directions { General.
Particular.

1. General.

1. Be not your own Choosers.

Man's unsuitness to be his own Chooser of his Condition.

Quest. How a man may know he is not his own chooser.

Answered in 8. Particulars.

Quest. Whether Lawful, to wish things had fallen out

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out otherwise than they did.

Answered in several Particulars.

2. Particular Directions.

1. Seek not great things, but only what is Convenient.

The Good of desiring what only is Convenient.

1. It freeth us from Temptations.

2. It is the most Easy, in respect of
a burthen of { Cares.
Duties.

3. It is Safest for us.

4. Most Commodious for us as Christians, whose life

is compared to a { Race.
Warfar.
Pilgrimage.

CHAP. XIV.

Quest. What is to be Accompted { Competent.
Convenient.

Answered in 4. things.

2. Direction, Seek those things that are good, without Controversy and Dispute.

Quest. What those things are?

Ans. 1. In General. Godliness, which is good and profitable

{ For all Persons.
For all Things.
At all Times.
For both Worlds.

2. In Particular. This is Good without Dispute.

1. To Eye more the Enjoyment of God, than Enjoyments from God.

2. To Rejoyce more in the God of our Mercies, then in the Mercies of our God.

3. To

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3. To serve God chearfully, however He serve us.
4. To keep God, what ever we lose for keeping Him.
5. To remember God and his Glory, in all our wayes.
6. To Consecrate all we have, to His service.
7. To give the things of another life the Preheminnence. Wherein giving them the Preheminnence, shewed in 5. Particulars.
8. What ever a mans condition be in this life, to fetch comfort from the consideration, of what his condition hereafter shall be.
9. What ever his Portion be, to make God his Portion.
Reasons, Why we should make God our Portion.
10. To have Sin Pardoned. Set out in 2. Particulars.
11. To lay up Treasure, where things are
Purest.
Surest.
12. To seek after Distinguishing Favours.
13. To keep Peace Within, however things are without.
14. To keep our selves in a continual preparation for Death.
This is shewed in 5. Particulars.

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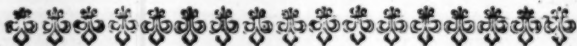
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A POSING QUESTION.

Eccles. 6. 12.

*For, who knoweth what is Good for
Man in this Life?*

CHAPTER I.



His Book of *Ecclesiastes*, is a book full of Discoveries. The great discovery *Solomon* makes in it, is this, *Viz.* What it is upon which the desires of Man ought to fix, as their utmost End and Rest.

Thereupon, *Solomon* makes this great Enquiry, Wherein Man's chiefest Good and Happineffe consists?

In it he proceeds { 1. Negatively,
2. Affirmatively.

1. Negatively; and so, shews wherein true Hap-
pinesse

pineffe is not to be found: And there you have *Solomon* discovering the false and counterfeit Felicities of mans dark heart, and the wofull mistakes of men about their chiefeft Good.

This he doth more { Generally,
Particularly.

1. More Generally, in this Proposition, *Cap.*
1. 2. *Vanity of vanities, All is vanity.*

2. More Particularly; In recounting severall things, whereon men fix their Eyes and Hearts, as though happineffe were to be found in them.

1. Knowledg, both Naturall and Morall.

2. Pleasure, and all the sweetest earthly Delights.

3. Honour, and greatnesse of Authority.

4. Riches, and earthly Possessions.

The three first of these, *Solomon* discourseth of in the four first *Chapters*. And in the fifth *Chapter* he comes to examine, and consider of that of Riches. And having, in the former *Chapter*, by many Arguments, proved the Vanity of Riches; he comes in this *Chapter* to adde four Arguments more.

1. A man may have the Possession of them, and yet want the right Use, and comfortable Enjoyment of them. This you have, in the six first *Verses*.

2. They are not able to give satisfaction to the Desires of men. This he proves, *Ver. 7. All the labour of a man is for his Mouth, i. e. for the Body, and the services of It; But the Appetite is not filled.* And further confirms it, *Ver. 8.* by comparing the Wise and Foolish, Rich and Poor, together. If there were such contentment, and satisfaction to be

be found in Riches, why then Wise men and Rich men should, of all others, enjoy the happinesse of it. But, saith Solomon, *What hath the Wise more than the Foolish? What hath the Poor, that knoweth to walk before the Living?* q. d. What hath a painfull and laborious Poor man lesse of Contentment than the Rich?

3. Riches are unable to preserve from, or protect against, those Evils to which Man is subject, viz. Sicknes, Pain, Grief, Sin, Wrath. *Ver. 10. That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is Man.* i. e. Call him what you will; Wise, Honourable, Rich; why yet he is still but Man, Weak, Earthy, Frail, Mortal; and so, subject to those Miseries that attend Man.

4. Abundance of Riches hath abundance of Cares, Troubles, Distractions, Disquietments, *Ver. 11. Seeing there are many things that increase Vanity, what is Man the better?* q. d. Many, by encreasing Riches, think to encrease Happiness; yet they do but encrease Vanity: And if so, then Man is so far from being the better, that he is the worse for them.

Thus, Solomon shewes how men are mistaken in thinking Happinesse to lye in Riches; And the ground of this mistake is laid down in the words of the Text, and that is; Mans ignorance of what is good for him in this life; He thinks that good, which is evil. *For, who knoweth what is good for man in this life?*

The words are a Questionary Proposal. *Who knoweth what is good for man in this Life?* The Interrogation implies a Negation, and so resolves it self into this universal negative Proposition; No

man knowes what is good for man in this life. One great thing, about which the ignorance of man discovers it self, is this, What is good, and what is evil, for a man in this life.

The Conclusion deducible from the words, is this:

Doct. *No man infallibly knowes what is good, and (so on the contrary) what is evil, for a man in this Life.*

In the handling of this Proposition, I shall proceed

By way of { Explication.
Confirmation.
Application.

r. For Explication. So we are to make two Enquiries.

1. Of what *Good*, this is to be understood.

2. Of what *Men*, this is to be understood: And whether every man is concluded under the Ignorance of what is good for a man in this Life.

1. Consider of what *Good* this Proposition is to be understood. So the Question is, Whether no man knoweth what is good for himself in any particular.

For the better understanding of this, consider, What it is that we call *good*? That is *Good* that all desire. *Goodness* is, *Congruentia rei cum appetitu*, It is the suitableness and agreement of the thing to and with the desire; And hence it is, that *bonum & appetibile*; what is good, and what is desirable, are the same.

Now here is the Question, when every one desires

fires what is good, that, for all that, no man knows
What is good for a man; since every man knows
what it is that suites with his desires.

For the Answering of this Question, we must
give-in some Distinctions.

1. Distinction is this;

There is *Bonum* { *Reale*
 Apparens

There is *Good real*, and, *Good in appearance*. There
is that that is truly good, and that that seemeth
good but is truly evil; There is that that is good,
and that that only seems good.

Now when we tell you, No man knoweth what is
good for a man in this life; It is to be understood
of the former, not of the latter. No man knows
what is really good for him; He knows indeed
what is seemingly good for him, what pleaseth
his carnal appetite and corrupt desires; but what
is really good for him, Man knoweth not.

2. Distinction;

There is *Bonum* { *Jucundum*, good pleasing.
 Utile, good profitable.

1. There is a *Pleasing good*, that pleaseth our Na-
tures, and delights our Senses.

2. There is a *Profitable good*; And we must know
this, that things may be pleasingly good, that are
not profitably good. Things may be toothsome,
that are not wholesome. A man in the Fit of an
Ague, knows, Drinking much would be a pleasing
good to him, when the Physician knows, it would

not be a profitable good and so denyeth it.

Now the proposition is to be understood of the latter, not of the former. Every man knoweth what is a pleasing good. He knoweth, (as it is said of *Issachar*) Rest is good, and Health is good; but he knows not what is a profitable good for man.

3. Distinction;

There is Good that is so { *Simpliciter*
Secundum Quid.

1. There is that which is, in it self, and of it self, good; So Riches, and Health, and Honour, are in themselves good, being Blessings of God, and Streams that Issue from that Fountain of Goodness that is in him. And so, on the contrary, that are in themselves Evil; as Poverty, Sickness, Crosses, Afflictions, being brought in by Sin.

2. There is that that is good in some respects, *et quoad nos*, in respect of us. There is *Bonum commodum*, a convenient good. That may be good in it self, that is not good for us; I mean, a convenient good.

So the Proposition is to be understood of the latter, not of the former. A man may know what is good in it self, when he may not know what is good for him. A man may know, Riches are good, when yet they may not be a convenient good for him. *Agur's Prayer, Prov. 30.8. was, Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, feed me with food Convenient.* Though he saw, Riches were in themselves good, yet he question'd whether they were a Convenient good for him; and thereupon desires a middle Estate, between Poverty and Riches. So that, when we tell

tell you, No man knowes what is good for man in this life, it is to be understood of a Convenient good.

4. Distinction.

There is good in Respect

1. Of our Apprehensions and Imaginations.
2. Of Gods Intention.

1. There is good in respect of our apprehensions. So men, have their severall apprehensions of what is good, and what is evil. One man apprehends Honour good for him, and Riches good for him; And apprehends Disgrace evil, and Poverty evil. A man apprehends Health good, and Sicknes evil, for him.

2. There is good in Gods Intention. And so the Proposition is to be understood of the latter, not of the former. Though a man may know what is good for himself in his own apprehension, yet he knows not what is good for him in *Gods Intention*. What a man apprehends to be good to him, may be intended for evil; and what he apprehends as evil, may be intended to him for good, Eccles. 9. 1. *No man knowes Love or Hatred by any thing that is before him.* The meaning is, That no man from outward blessings, which are good in our apprehension, can conclude that God loves him, and intends good to him; And no man from outward Afflictions, which are evil in a mans apprehension, can conclude hatred, or that He intends evil to him. So that though a man knoweth what is good and evil for him in his own Apprehension, yet he knoweth not what is good or evil in God's Intention.

5. Distinction :

There is *Good*, that is good in a General Notion and Consideration; And *Good*, that is good in relation to particular Cases, and to particular Times.

So the Proposition is to be understood of the latter, not of the former. This is granted, that a man may know what is good and what is evil for him in General; but a man knoweth not what is good for him in such a particular Case, and at such a particular Time. As *Hushai* said of *Achitophel's* Counsell, *It is not good at this time*; Why so what a man looks upon as good for him, may not be good for him at such a time. Riches that seem to be Good for a man, yet at some times may be Evil to a man. As in Plundering times, it was a mans unhappinesse either to be, or to be thought, Rich.

Thus for the first thing, *Of what Good this is to be understood.*

2. The second thing to be Enquired after, is, *Of what Men, this is to be understood?* So the Question is; Whether the Proposition concludes all men; without Exception, under this ignorance; and excludes all from the knowledge of *what is good for them in this Life?*

So the Question is concerning Godly men that are sanctified, and enlightened by the Spirit of God, Whether are they as Ignorant in this particular, as others?

Answ. There is a great difference to be put between the Spiritual and the Natural man, in respect of their knowledge of *what is good or evil for a man in this Life.* A Godly man, not only knows what is good for a man, in relation to the Life to come; as Pardon of Sin, an Interest in Christ, &c. but also he knows more than others do *what is good for a man in this Life.* He knows, that many things are good for a man, that are apprehended to be evil; and

and he knows, there are many things *evil* for a man that are look'd on as *good*. Thus *David* said, *It was good for him that he had been afflicted*; when others looked upon Afflictions as *evil*, he looked on them as *good* for him. *Agur* prayed against *Riches*; why, he knew they were *evil* for him, when others look upon abundance as *good*.

So, consider; a *Godly* man hath Four things to help him in the knowledg of this, that others have not.

1. He hath the Spirit of God to instruct and teach him *what is good and evil for a man in this life*. When others are only led by Sense, & Opinion, the *Godly* man is taught, and led by the Spirit of God.

2. He hath the Sanctuary to go into, where he may learn what is *Good and Evil for a man in this Life*. There *David* tells you, that he attain'd to this knowledg; and, till he went into the Sanctuary he was ignorant of it, *Psal. 73. 17.---till I went into the Sanctuary*. Till then, he thought it was *ill* for good men, that they were *afflicted*; and that it was *good* for wicked men, that they were in *prosperity*: But when he came into the Sanctuary, he was informed otherwise.

3. The *Godly* man hath *convincing* Experience, by which he comes to know *what is good and evil for a man in this life*. So that by experience, he knows that to be *good* for him, that others think *evil*, *Psal. 119. 71. It is good for me that I have been Afflicted*, *David* speaks it from experience.

4. The *Godly* man hath the Promise to help him too, *Rom. 8. 28. All things work together for good to them that Love God*. So that, being such as Love God, they know all shall be for Good to them, be it what it will. Though it seem *Evil*, yet it shall work for Good. These

These things Godly men have above others, whereby they are enabled above others to know what is Good for them this in Life. And yet, for all this, the Proposition includes them too, as well as others. It is true, *Solomon* (it is probable) means it chiefly of the Natural and Unregenerate man; yet it takes in the Godly man too, as one that knows not what is Good for a man in this Life. And that especially in two Cases:

1. A Godly man knows not what is good for a man, in all things.
2. He knows not what is good for a man, at all times.

1. A Godly man knows not what is good for a man in *all things*. In this (as the Apostle speaks) *they know but in part*. And it appears thus; that they have been denied in their Requests, Praying for that that God saw not Good for them. Thus *Abraham* for *Ishmael*. Thus *Moses* requested to have gone into the Land of *Canaan*. And Gods denying them these Requests, must be interpreted Gods not seeing that particular thing Good for them; and that indeed it was not good for them: The Will of God being the highest Rule of *Goodness*.

So we find some of the Servants of God have been blinded with *passion* in some of their *requests*; as *Elijah* and *Jonah*; and God did not see it good to grant them what they desired. *They Asked they knew not what*.

2. A Godly man may not know what is good for him, at *all times*. Of that they have been ignorant till they have gone into the *Sanctuary*, and till experience hath afterward taught it them. Time was, when *David*, a Godly man, was mistaken about

(11)

about the Afflictions of Godly men, and the Prosperity of Wicked men; till he went *into the Sanctuary*. Till then, he was as Ignorant as other men. So that till then, a Godly man may be Ignorant of, *What is good for man in this life.*

CHAP. II.

NOW for the Confirmation of the Proposition.

I shall confirm it by { 1. Scripture.
2. Reason

1. By Scripture. So we may gather, from Scripture, two things, that may serve to assert the truth of this Proposition.

1. Scripture acquaints us with what Disappointments men have met with in those ways, wherein they have dreamt of nothing but *good*, and *benefit*, and *advantage* to themselves. How many have Ruin'd themselves, by that by which they thought to have Rais'd themselves. Scripture gives us many Instances in this kind, of those whose Table hath been their Snare; and what they thought should have been for their Welfare, hath become their Trap, *Psal. 69. 22.* And this shews how men have been mistaken in *what is good for them*. The Scripture furnisheth us with many Instances; as those of *Ahab*, in compassing *Naboths Vineyard*. *Gehezi*, in getting the Talents of Silver from *Naaman*. *Achan*, in stealing the Wedge of Gold, and the
Babyl-

Babylonish Garment. *Havian*, in screwing himself into the Favour and Affection of his Prince. *Israel*, in asking a King; and in asking Quails. Scripture shews us how these were mistaken about what was *good* for them. We may say of them, this, That, had they known what had been *good* for them, they would not have done what they did. *Solomon*, in *Eccles.* 5. 13. speaks of an Evil that he had seen under the Sun, viz. *Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt*. Surely, if the owners had not thought they had been for their *good*, they would not have laid them up.

2. Scripture acquaints us with this; That there have been many, that, contrary to expectation, have found those things *good* for them that they thought *evil*, and looked on them as *Evils*. As it tells us of many, that found that to be *evil* to them, that they thought to be *good* for them; so of many, that have found that to be *good* for them, that they thought to have been *evil*. Scripture furnisheth us with Instances in this particular. And here time would fail me to tell you

1. Of *Job*, who looked upon himself, as the most Miserable man in the World; That God had set him as a Mark to shoot at; as if God would make sport with him. He tells you how God wrote bitter things against him; Yet we see, all was for his *good*. And so we see *Jam.* 5. 15. what end God made with him: so that we see by that, that *Job* was mistaken about his Afflictions.

2. *David*, *Psal.* 119. 71. confesseth, *It is good for me that I have been Afflicted*. Consider, time was, when *David* did not think so.
Time

Time was when *David* complained of them. But see, he was afterwards of another mind, and tells us, It was *good* for him that he was *afflicted*. In *Psal. 73.* (if he were the Penman of it) you find there was a time when he was envious at the prosperity of the Wicked, and thought them the happiest men; and he was troubled at the adversity of the Godly, and thought them the most miserable men; but afterwards he confesseth his ignorance and mistake in that particular.

To close up this: If you look upon *Heb. 12.* you shall find the Apostle speaking to Christians under Affliction; and endeavours to convince them of their mistake about Afflictions, and that they looked upon that as evil which was for their good. You shall find, this is the scope of the Apostle in the beginning of that Chapter. And then, *vers. 7. 8. 9.* He tells them they are Chastisements, and that they bring forth the quiet fruit of Righteousness; *q. d.* When you come to taste the fruit of these *Afflictions*, you will be of another *minde*: You will find, contrary to your expectation, that *good* for you that you thought *evil*. You must judge of the Tree by the Fruit; and when you come to taste the *Fruit* of *Afflictions*, you will say, You were mistaken in the Tree.

Thus for the Confirmation by Scripture.

2. We come to shew the Grounds and Reasons of the Proposition, Why no man infallibly knows what is good for *man* in this life.

So

So there is { 1. Some Reason of it, in Respect of God.
 { 2. Some reasons of it, in respect of Man.

1. The Reason of it in Respect of God is this : Because God hath hid this knowledge from *man*, and therefore, no *man* knoweth what is *good* for *man* in this life.

And if any ask, For what reason God hath hid this knowledg from man? I Answer.

1. God hath done it to maintain his own Pre-rogative. It onely belongs to him who made the creature to know what is *good* for the creature. It belongs only to him who hath given life to man, to know what is *good* for a man in this life. He knows man best, and knows best what is good for man, whether *Riches* or *Poverty*; *Quietness* or *Trouble*; *Health* or *Sickness*; *Life* or *Death*. This knowledg is too high and excellent for man. It is not for man to know this, which God hath put in his own Power.

2. God doth it to keep man in a state of Dependance on him, and Submission to him; That man may know at whose finding he is, and at whose disposing, (*viz.*) of that God, who onely knows what is *good* for man. God doth it, to take the creature off from being his own Carver. He will have man look to Him, and seek to Him, for what is good for him. God hath hid this knowledge from man, that man may pray both for the *good* things, and against the *evills*, of this life, with submission to the will of God. Lord, *I know not what is good, or what is evill for me in this life; and therefore I leave my self to thee; and in those things submit my self to thee: Thou shalt Dispose of me; Thou shalt Carve for me,*
Thou

Thou shalt Guide me by thy Counsel, who onely knowest what is good or evill for me in this life; Thou shalt chuse my condition for me.

3. God hides this knowledge from man, to magnify and make the Glory of his Wisdom and Power known, in working contrary to the apprehensions, hopes, and expectations of man.

So the Wisdom and Power of God shewes it self.

- 1. In a way of Justice, turning good into evill.
- 2. In a way of Mercy, turning evill into good.

1. He shewes his Wisdom and Power in a way of Justice, causing what was apprehended by men as good for them, to become *evil* to them, contrary to their hopes and expectations. Thus the Lord causeth some mens Tables to become their Snare; and what they thought to have bin for their welfare, to be their Trap. Thus the Lord lets some men lay up Riches for their hurt, and suffers them to get Honour to their shame. There is an expression in Mal. 2. 2. *I will curse your Blessings.* God can make seeming blessings to become Curses. And in this his Wisdom and Power are Gloriously seen. God can let a man think he hath a good thing in his hand, and turn it into an evill. And hence it is, some have cursed their Riches, and Honour, and worldly Greatness, as *Charles* the first, and *Philip* the Second of *Spain* did.

2. He shewes his Wisdom and Power in a way of Mercy, in turning seeming *evills* into good. That when a man thinks it to be an *evill*, God turns it to good, contrary to a mans apprehension, hope, and

and expectation. Thus, as he can turn the Rod into a Serpent, so he can turn the Serpent into a Rod: He can bring *good* out of *evill*, and *light* out of *darknesse*. As he can turn a seeming *blessing* into a *curse*, so he can turn a seeming *curse* into a *blessing* . When *Balack* would have cursed *Israel*, *Moses* tells them, *Deut. 23. 5. God turned it into a Blessing. Josephs* brethren intended *evil* against him, but God turned it into *good*, *Gen. 50. 20*. And upon this account it is, that God hides the knowledg of what is *good* for a man in this life from man, that he may have a freedom and liberty of declaring his Wisdóm and Power when he please, both in turning *evill* into *good*, and *good* into *evill*, contrary to máns apprehensions, hopes, and expectations.

4. God hath hid this knowledg from man, to keep man humble in the midst of his greatest outward enjoyments. That the great man may not glory in his greatness, and that the rich man may not glory in his riches; since he knows not whether they are good for him. When a man considers this with himself, I have Honour, but I know not whether it be for my *good*; I have Riches, but I know not whether it be for my *good*: how humble should the consideration of this make a man in the midst of these enjoyments? When he considers, Honour hath been many a mans Snare; Riches, and outward prosperity have been many a mans Trap, and I know not but they may be so to me: how humble should this keep a man, when he knoweth not whether they are for his *good*? God doth it to keep man from boasting of his enjoyments, *Prov. 27. 1. Boast not thy self of to Morrow (saith Solomon;) for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. So men must*

must not boast of their Wealth or Honour, since they know not what they may bring forth. Thus a man should reason with himself; Why should I be proud of those things which have proved evill to some, and I know not but they may be so to me?

5. God hath hid this knowledge from man, To make man patient in *affliction*, and to make him hope in the worst condition: when a man considers thus with himself, Alas I know not what is *good* for me in this life: For ought I know, these afflictions are good for me; and what reason have I then to be impatient under them? why should I fret and murmur at these dispensations? Do I know what these Crosses and Afflictions may bring forth? Do I know, but that *good* may lie in the womb of them? The Tree may seem bitter, yet the Fruit may be Sweet. The Rose is Sweet, yet the Tree that bears it, is Thorny. I know not, what Grapes may grow upon these Thorns, and what Figs upon these Thistles. When *Shimei* cursed *David*, what said *David*? 2Sam. 16. 12. *It may be the Lord will do me good for this.* God not onely knows how to do his people *good*, but how to do them *good* by seeming evils. *It is good for me (saith David) that I have been Afflicted.* Psal. 119.

6. God hath hid this knowledge from man, To keep men from judging and censuring one another. To keep the Rich from despising the poor, and to keep the poor from envying the Rich. If a man knew, that Riches were good for a man in this life, and that Poverty were evill for a man; then would Rich men look upon themselves as the onely blessed men, and judge of the poor as the only miserable men. So that, as the Apostle saith of eating,

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Rom. 14. 3. Let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; and let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; So will the Lord have it to be among men, in this case: He will not have the Rich and Great Ones of the world to despise the poor; neither will he have the poor, and such as are in a low condition, to envy the Rich. And, to prevent this, the Lord hath hid this knowledg from man, of what is *good* or *evill* for him in this life. Thou, ô Rich man, knowest not but that thy riches may be for thy hurt, Why shouldst thou then despise the poor? And what knowest thou, O poor man, but thy poverty may be for thy *good*; and why then shouldst thou envy the Rich? This is the disease to which Rich and Poor are subject; The Rich are apt to despise the poor, *Jam. 2. 6.* And the poor are apt to envy the Rich, *Psal. 37. 1.* And the Lord, for the curing of this disease in both, hath hid this knowledge from man.

7. God hath hid this knowledg from man, To let man see that the things of this life are not the things (*viz.*) the only things and the main things, that a man should look after. He doth it to let man know, that outward evils are not evils to be feared, for they may be for *good*: And that outward *good things*, are not the onely *good things* to be sought after; for they may be for a mans hurt. And so the reason why God hides this knowledg from man of knowing what is *good* or *evill* for man in this life, is, That he may especially seek after those things that are *good*, and fly from those evils that have relation to another life. Those things that we call *good*, *viz.* things of this life, are but things *changeably good*; they are things may become evil to a man, and

and therefore not the only good things to be *sought after*; And those things, that we call evil, are but *changeably evil*, such *evils* as may be for good; and therefore not the only *evils* to be *fled from*. There are good things that are *unchangeably good*, which are good for a man in relation to another life, and these are the things mainly to be sought after. And there are *evils* that are *unchangeably evil*, which are evil for a man in relation to another life; and those are the *evils* that are most to be feared and fled from.

8. God hath hid this knowledg from man, To keep man in a preparation for all conditions: That since he knows not what is good for man in this life, he may be prepared for what God seeth good for him; that he may be fitted for all the dispensations and purposes of God concerning him. *Solomon* sayeth *Prov. 27. 1. Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.* And why hath God hidden that knowledg from man, but that a man may be prepared for what ever a day shall bring forth, whether good or evil, mercies or miseries, life or death. *Solomon* in *Eccles. 7. 14.* speaking of prosperity and adversity, saith, *God hath set them, the one over against the other, that Man may find out nothing after him.* There is Chequer-work in the Dispensations of God toward man in this life. There is Black and White; There are Fair and Foul, Sunshine and Rainy days Intermingled; There is Prosperity and Adversity, changes of Conditions. And mark, God hath set the one over against the other, there is Adversity, opposite to Prosperity; there is a Vally, over against a Hill. And see for what end? *That Man may find out nothing after him.* What is the meaning of that? why this, That man should not know

what shall come afterwards, or what shall come next, whether Prosperity or Adversity, that so he may be prepared for both. When God hath set a man upon a Mountain of Prosperity, he cannot assure himself he shall alwayes stand there; for there is the Valley of Adversity set over against that Mountain, and he knoweth not how soon he may be in it. And so, since he knows not what may be next, God will have him keep himself in a preparation for all conditions. *Phil. 4.11.* The Apostle saith, *I have learned to be full, and to be hungry; to abound, and to want.* As if he should say, I am prepared for what God sees good for me; if he see it good for me to be in a low condition, to be hungry and to want, I am prepared for it, I am prepared for all conditions. And this is one reason, why God hath hid this Knowledg from man, that man may be prepared for all Conditions. There is an expression in *Eccles. 8.7.* *Man knoweth not, what shall be.* And what is the reason that man knows not what shall be? why this, That man may be prepared for what ever shall be.

9. God hath hid this knowledg from man, To shew man the vanity of his thoughts, and to let man see how his thoughts differ from the thoughts of God. As the Lord saith in another case, *Esa. 55.8.* *My Thoughts are not as your thoughts.* So the Lord will have men know, that his thoughts and mans thoughts, are not the same in respect of what is good or evil for a man in this life. God doth it to shew man his thoughts and the vanity of them. Man thinks that *Riches* and *Honour* are good for him in this life, and God lets him see how he is mistaken in his thoughts, by their becoming evil to him; And man thinks *Afflictions* are evil for him in this life,
and

and God lets man see how he is mistaken in his thoughts, by turning them to *good*. Thus God shews man the mistake and vanity of his thoughts, in respect of what is *good* or *evil* for man in this life. And so the Lord discovers to man the vanity of his thoughts in this particular, in three things.

1. In thinking those happy, that enjoy the *good* things of this life; when alas, poor man knoweth not but these things are evil for him. Thus the Lord in turning mens Tables into Snares, shewes His Thoughts are not as man's. We read of some, *Mal. 3. 15.* that *call'd the Proud, Happy*: They thought wicked men were the happiest men; But God tells them he would have a time to shew them the vanity of their thoughts, *v. last.* *Then shall ye return, and discern between the Righteous and the Wicked.* As if he should say, You shall see, My Thoughts were not as your thoughts. Men are ready to think, the Rich man the happy man, and the Great man the happy man. And thus he discovers to man the vanity of his thoughts, and to let them know, that they know not the thoughts of the Lord. As the expression is, *Micah 4. 12.* *But they know not the Thoughts of the Lord.*

2. In his thinking them the only miserable men that are *afflicted*; it is usual with men to do so: And God by hiding from man what is *good* for man in this life, discovers to man the vanity of those thoughts. Thus, by making *afflictions* *good* for a man, they come to see they were mistaken in their thoughts, and find that Gods thoughts were not as their thoughts. God in this, gives man to see his folly in giving a judgment of those things he knows not. And to let man see, that while he

professeeth himself wise, he becomes a fool, *Rom. 1.22* That he is mistaken about the intentions of God, since what he apprehended *evil*, was by God intended for *good*. God by this lets men see how much their apprehensions and His intentions differ. How hath the Lord brought men to acknowledge their folly in this particular. Thus he that was the Penman of *Psal. 73.* tells you at *vers. 22.* *So foolish was I and Ignorant!*

3. In his judging of the intentions of Gods heart, by the dispensations and operations of His hand; And for this reason God hath hid this knowledge from man, to shew man the vanity of his thoughts, and his judgings, in that particular. Though Gods heart and hand go together, yet not alwayes so as men imagine. Men think, where there is a loving heart, there should be a blessing hand; and, where there is an afflicting hand, there should be an hating heart. God carryeth things in a mystery; But God will give man to know, he understands not that mystery. Man is ready to think, God intendeth *good* to that man to whom he dispenseth *good* things, (I mean) things temporally *good*; and that he intendeth *evil* to that man, to whom he dispenseth things temporally *Evil*. Now the Lord by hiding this knowledge from man, will let man see how he is mistaken in these thoughts, and will let him know, that, with a loving heart, there may go an afflicting hand; and with an hating heart, an hand that is seemingly a blessing hand; That there may be *good* in his intention, when there may be seeming *evil* in his Dispensation. When God Afflicts, and Chastiseth, and Corrects, Who would think there

there were good in His Intention? and yet, *Heb. 12: 10. He chasteneth us for our profit. Rev. 3. 19. As many as I love, I Rebuke and Chasten. Remember that, Eccles. 9. 1. No man knowes love or hatred by what is before him; he knoweth not the Intentions of God by his Dispensations; he knoweth not Gods Heart by Gods Hand.*

And thus for the Ground in General, Why God hath hid the Knowledge of what is Good or Evil for a man in this life.

CHAP. III.

I Now come to give you the Particular *Reasons*, why no man knoweth what is good for a man in this life.

So the Ground of it is this.

Reason. Mans inability to know what is good for a man in this life. So consider; Man is utterly unable to make a judgement of Conditions, and infallibly to say, what is good or evil for a man in this life.

The ignorance of man is great in this particular, and I shall shew you it to be such, that it is not possible for a man, as man, to give a judgement of what is good for a man in this life. And that in these Particulars.

I. A man knoweth not what the spirits and dispositions of men are, and therefore he cannot know what is a fit and convenient good for them in this life. We know not, what will fit a mans spirit and disposition, unless we know his spirit and disposition.

position. He knoweth not the foot, and therefore knoweth not what shooe will fit him. *No man* (saith the Apostle) *knows the things of a man*, and so he knowes not the spirits and dispositions of men. Nay let me tell you more, Man knoweth not his own spirit and disposition, and how a condition will suit with it. Christ told his Disciples, *Luk. 9. 55. They knew not of what spirit They were.* And then, man knoweth not, what is a fit and *convenient good* for himself. It is with men in this case, as with some that drink Wine, who find it pleasant, but know not the strength of it, nor the strength of their own heads to bear it, and so come to be distemper'd by it before they are aware. Every man thinks prosperity *good* for him, when as all men can no more bear a prosperous condition, then all heads can bear Wine or strong Drink. Man knowes not how a condition will suit with his disposition, till they meet. We have a Famous Instance in *Hazael*, *2 King. 8. 13.* when he heard what was prophesied of him, he thought the doing of such things did better suit with the nature of a Dog then of a Man; and therefore answers, *Is thy Servant a Dog, that he should do so?* But what is the Prophets reply? *The Lord hath shewed me, that thou shalt be King over Syria*, q. d. The change of thy condition will presently discover that disposition to be in thee, that now thou wilt not believe is in thee.

All men know not what Lyons and Wolves lie sleeping in their bosoms, till they are awakened. Like the Snake in the Snow, that doth not stir and hisse, till it feel the warmth of the fire of prosperity.

Every man is apt to think his head can bear the
Wine

Wine of Prosperity till he drink of it. As the Sons of *Zebedee* answered Christ, when he asked them, Can ye Drink of the Cup that I must Drink of, and be Baptised with the Baptism I must be Baptised with, and they answered, *We are able*. So ask a man, whether he be fit and able to bear a prosperous condition? whether he be fit for Honour and Riches? why, he is ready to answer, that he is able; when alas, he knoweth not his own spirit and disposition. And therefore, through a suspicion of this, *Agur* prayed, *Prov. 30. 8. That God would give him neither Poverty nor Riches*; And why he prayed against riches, he gives the reason, *lest I be full and forget Thee*. Why, he did not know under what Temptations Riches might bring him: They might be such strong drink that his head would not bear. And in this he shew'd he was Ignorant of his own spirit and disposition; he was afraid that Riches would not suit with it.

II. Man is ignorant of this, how Men will manage their conditions, and thereupon is unable to give, and make a Judgement of them. Man knoweth not, how a man will use, and improve his condition. Things prove *good* or *evil* to men according to their management of them. There is an Art of managing conditions, which most men are ignorant of; a condition that might be for a mans *good*, through the ill-managing of it, becomes *evil*. It is the saying of one, that, Every thing hath two handles. And so it is in respect of Conditions, they have two handles. And here is the thing, to take Prosperity and Adversity, to take every condition by the right handle. Now in this the Ignorance of man is seen, In his taking of things by the wrong handle; and
so

So taking of conditions by wrong handles, they become evil; whereas if they would take them by the right handle, that condition might be for good to them that otherwise is not. So man knoweth not by what handle men will tak hold of Conditions.

Solomon hath an expression, Eccles. 8. 6. *To every purpose there is time and judgment; therefore the misery of man is great on him.* The meaning is this, That, God having put handles to things, and men not laying hold on the right handle, his not knowing how to do things, and when to do things, makes the miseries of man great upon him. So it is in respect of conditions; seeming mercies become miseries, because men know not how to use them; and seeming miseries would become mercies, if men did but know how to use them.

It is in this case with us as with children, who, if you give them a knife, know not to make any other use of it then to cut and wound themselves; and so, most men know not how to make any other use of their conditions, then to hurt themselves.

And hence it is that no man knowes what is good for man in this life, what condition is good for him, whether a prosperous or an adverse condition, because he knowes not how he will manage his condition.

The wrong Use man makes of Conditions, makes it impossible to man to give a judgment of conditions. And through this ignorance it comes to passe, that things prove to be evil for a man, that might have been for good. Upon this account many a mans Table becomes his Snare, and what might have been for his Welfare becomes his Trap. Thus by his abusing things, he makes Blessings become

become *Curses*; and so those things become *Evil* that might have been for *Good*.

Thus it is in respect of { Prosperity.
Adversity.

1. For Prosperity; How do many abuse it to the feeding of their lusts, whereby that becomes *evil* to them that might have been for *good*? and so by their ill managing of a condition, make that condition to become *evil* to them that might have bin for *good*. Why thus they draw *evil* out of *good*; as when a Spider draws Poyson out of a Flower, it is not from the Flower but the Nature of the Spider; that, turns it into Poyson.

2. For Adversity; Why there are many that do want the Art of making *good* out of *evil*; and so that becomes *evill* to them, that through their wise managing of it might have been for *good*. Men have learned the Art of making Wind and Water serviceable to them. We have a Saying of making a vertue of Necessity, and so there is an Art to make *good* out of *evil*: but man knowes it not.

That man will never be a good Bowler that knoweth not how to set the Byasse of his Bowle. Conditions have their Byasses: and here is the Art and Skill, to set the Byasse of a Condition right.

III. Man knoweth not to what Dangers, Evils, and Temptations, mens conditions may Expose them; and therefore they are not able to give a judgment of conditions, and to say what is *good* for a man in this life. We may look upon those things as *good* for a man which may expose him to such temptations and dangers that may be for his hurt and ruine. Remember, there are no outward or worldly *good* things, but do expose men to
many

many Evils, Dangers, and Temptations, and so become *evil* to a man in this *life*. Thus we find, Honour, Riches, outward Prosperity, do expose a man to Envy. As one saith of *Naboth*, It had been better for him he had not had a Vineyard, it cost him his life. These things have cost a man his sweetest things, (*viz.*) his Liberty and Life. How many men had lived longer, had they not had such and such things, wherein they seemed to excel and to be more happy then other men. And so the Historian saith of the *Romane* Emperours, That they got nothing by their Honour, *nisi ut citius interficerentur*, but to be kill'd the sooner. We read of *Esus Proculus*, that he was Slain by *Caligula*, for being the handsomest Man in *Rome*. Beauty and Handsomness was for his hurt. And *Seneca* was condemned for being too Eloquent, though, at the Intercession of one of the Emperour's Lemans his life was spared. And hence it is, a man is not able to give a judgment of things, because he knows not what their issue may be, and what dangers they may bring a man under; because experience shews, that it had been *good* for some men to have bin without those things, that, in the eyes of some, seemed to be *good* for them. That, as our Saviour said of *Judas*, It had bin good for that man, if he had not bin born; So we may say of some, it had been *good* for them, if they never had had Honour, Riches, Beauty, and other things that most men look upon, as *good* for a man in this *life*.

IV. Man knoweth not what Snares Satan hath laid in a *Condition*, to catch and entrap a man in; and therefore is not able to give or make a judgment of outward conditions. Through his devices, that
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condition may become *evil* that seemed to be for *good*.

Satan is a subtil Adversary, and he seeks to get an advantage against us by the conditions we are in. He endeavours to make every condition, a Snare and a Trap to us. He strives to make Temptations out of our Conditions. He knows how to make use of our Conditions to advantage himself, and to hurt us. And man knows not what Snares Satan may lay for a man in a condition, and what advantage he may make of it to hurt a man, and therefore no certain Judgment can be made of it. Satan is a careful and diligent Observer, as of our Constitutions, so of our Conditions, and will be sure to suit his Temptations to them. He hath his Temptations for all Conditions, whether High or Low, whether Prosperous or Adverse.

1. If a man be in a Prosperous Condition, why there are Evils he Tempts a man to, in that Estate.

And those, both { Moral.
Spiritual.

I. *Moral*. So consider these :

1. Pride and High-mindedness. Prosperity inclines a man to it, and here Satan sayles with Wind and Tide, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. *Charge them that be Rich in this world that they be not High-minded.*
2. Boasting and Glorifying in their Prosperity, with a Contemning of those whose Condition is meaner, *Jerem.* 9. 23. *Let not the Rich man Glory in his Riches.*

3. Injustice

3. Injustice and Oppression, *Prov. 22. 7. The Rich Man Ruleth over the Poor. Or, as it may be read, Domineereth.*
4. Luxury, and Profuseness, and Wantonness. *As the Sodomites. And Dives that fared Deliciously every day.*

II. *Spiritual Evils* there are, to which a Prosperous Condition Inclines a man, and to which Satan will be ready to Tempt a man: and these are Three;

1. Forgetting God and forgetting Duty. And upon this Account it was, *Agur* prayed against Riches, *Prov. 30. 9. Lest I be full, and forget Thee.*
2. Creature-Confidence. We find the Scripture frequent in giving Cautions concerning that, *1 Tim. 6. 17. That men should not trust in uncertain Riches.*
3. Security, We read of the Rich man in the Gospel, *Luke 12. 19. who bid his Soul take its ease, it had goods laid up for many years.*

Why thus you see a Prosperous Condition hath its Temptations; and all these ways, Satan is ready to get an advantage of a man that is in that condition?

Now who can give a Judgement of a mans Condition when it is Prosperous, when he knoweth not but it may cast him into some of these Evills.

2. If a man be in an Adverse Condition, why that hath its Temptations too. When a mans Condition is low, then Satan Tempts him to Murthering, Discontent, Impatiency, Envy, use of Unlawful means. And, upon this Account, *Agur* prayed against Poverty, *Prov. 30. Lest I be Poor and Steal.* He saw, that condition had its Temptations.

Why thus you see, every Condition hath its Temptations: and, How shall man be able to make a Judgment of Conditions, when he knows not what Temptations he may fall under, by reason of his Condition; when we know not, but Satan, through his Wiles and Devices, may make a condition *evil* for a man, that else might have been for his *good*; how he may make that Condition his Snare, that might have been for his Welfare?

V. Man cannot make a Judgment of what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this life, because he knoweth not, what the wheel is that is within the Wheel. We read *Ezek. 1. Of the wheel in the wheel.* Consider, there is the outward wheel of Dispensation that is visible to us, and there is a secret wheel of Providence within that wheel. So that when we look upon the outward wheel of Prosperity, or Adversity, we know not what Wheel moves within those wheels. We see how the outward wheel moves, but we know not what the motions are of the Wheel within; Its motions may be cross to the wheel without.

I. Consider how it is in respect of Prosperity. There is an outward wheel that is visible, and seems to move to a mans Honour, Exaltation, and Advancement in the world; and yet we know not what

what cross motions the secret wheel of Providence may have to the External wheel of Dispensation: While the outward wheel seems to move to a mans Good, and Honour, and Advantage; the inward wheel (for ought we know) may be moving to a mans Hurt and Ruine. According to the saying of the Poet,

*Tolluntur in altum
Ut lapsu graviore ruant*

Their lifting up, may tend to their casting down. While the outward wheel may seem to raise them, and mount them; The wheel within, may move to the undoing and Destruction of them. We have a notable Instance of this in *Haman*: There was an outward wheel moving to his Raising and Advancement, to the setting of him High in the favour of his Prince, and who (that had lookt upon that) would not have thought, this had been for *Hamans* good? But see, there was a Wheel within the wheel, a Cross-wheel that was then moving to *Hamans* downfall, and *Hamans* ruine.

II. For Adversity, why you shall find sometimes the outward Wheel seemingly moving to a mans Hurt, and Ruine, and Disadvantage, when yet we know not the motions of the Wheel, that are within the wheel. There may be within that wheel, a Wheel of Providence moving to a mans good and advantage. Thus it was in the case of *Joseph*, when he was cast into a Pit, when he was sold into *Egypt*, when he was cast into Prison by his Master; Who would have thought but that this outward wheel of Dispensation had moved to *Joseph's* ruine; and yet, at the same time, there was a Wheel within this wheel moving to the
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Advancement of *Joseph*, and to the making him Ruler over all the Land of *Egypt*: So in the case of *Job*: When he was stript of all to a Shoo-latchet, when he was bereaved of his Goods, Cattel, Children, Health, Who would have thought but this wheel of Dispensation had moved to the Ruine and utter undoing of *Job*? And yet, at the same time, there was a wheel moving within this wheel to his *good* and advantage, as you may read in his Story. So the Apostle tells us, *Jam. 5. 11. You have heard of the Patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord.* God's end in all was *Jobs good*, though the outward Wheel of Dispensation spake it not.

So this is one reason, why a man knoweth not what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this life; because no man knows the motions of the Wheel of secret Providence, within the wheel of outward Dispensation. We know not what is the end of the Lord in a mans Prosperity or Adversity; our sight is not clear and peircing enough to discern the wheel within, and what Its motions are: When we see a man Great, and Rich, and Honourable, we cannot say, He is an happy man, and that it is *good* for him to be such; because we know not the end of the Lord: And so, when we see a man poor, and low, and in an afflicted condition, we cannot say, That man is miserable, or, that it is *evil* for him; because in this Dispensation we know not the end of the Lord; we know not how the wheel within moves.

Reas 6: Man knoweth not what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this life, because of that sudden and unexpected changeableness that there is in all Conditions. Man's ignorance of this, disables him to make a

judgment of outward Conditions. If a man could make the things of this life certain, why then he might make a judgment of them; but, the comfort in them and the enjoyment of them being uncertain, Who can make a true and perfect judgment of them? The things themselves are uncertain, and the *good* in them changeable; and, Who is the man then that can say, That things, that are so full of uncertainty and so changeable, are *good* for a man in this life? *Solomon*, in *Eccles. 7. 14.* speaking of Conditions, saith, *God hath set Prosperity and Adversity one over against the other*, as a Vally over against a Mountain: So that, when a man looks upon himself as set upon the Mountain of Prosperity, he seeth a Valley of Adversity over against him: why, he seeth a change of his condition before him; and though he stand at present upon the Mountain of Prosperity, yet he sees below him a Valley of Adversity, which he knoweth not how soon he may descend into. And, who can say, Prosperity is *good* for him, when he seeth Adversity over against him?

So consider: upon this account, it is impossible that a man should make a perfect judgment of Conditions.

Since { 1. Conditions are Changeable.
2. The Good and Comfort in a Condition is Changeable.

1. The Condition is changeable. An Honourable, Rich, & Prosperous Condition is changeable: and then, what is man the better for being in such a condition? *Psal. 49. 20.* *Man being in Honour continueth not.* And yet see, Men had other thoughts *vers. 11.* *Their inward thoughts was, that their houses should*

should continue for ever. They thought, It was good for a man to have Houses and Possessions, because they looked upon these things as constant, and enduring, and lasting; They thought their Inheritances lasting, and that they should leave them to those that would continue their memory for ever, that is, to their Children; which are, but the Parents multiplied and continued. Which, as one saith, is but *Nodosa Aeternitas*, a knotty Eternity; as when one thread is spun and broken, then another thread is knit to it: Thus men dream of a continued Succession. But what saith the *Psalmist*? This their way, is their folly; for man being in honour continueth not. Consider, there is a changeableness in all outward conditions; there may be a sudden turn of Providence. *Job* the Richest man in the East, lost all (as it were) in an instant. All the wit, and care, and industry, and providence of man, cannot hinder the Providence of God from making conditions changable. And considering this, Who can say, This or that condition is *good* or *evil* for a man, when he knoweth not how that condition may change? What if a prosperous condition should change? why then, it had been better a man had not known it; It making a man but more miserable to have been happy, and then to be miserable.

2. Though the Condition it self should continue, yet the comfort in the condition is changeable: why, the things of a condition, that seems good and comfortable and desirable, are changeable. The things of such a condition may become a Cross, and Burden, and Vexation; such a changeableness there is in the comforts of a condition that seemeth

good for a man. *Augustus* had three Daughters, and all of them very lew'd; and he was us'd to call them his *Tria Carcinomata* his three Ulcers or Botches; And was us'd to say, *Utinam aut celebs vixissem, aut orbis perissem*, I would I had lived unmarried, or died without Children. Life and Light are two of the sweetest things, and yet a man may out-live the comfort of them; they may prove a burden to a man as to *Job* (*Job 3.20*) *Why is life given to the Afflicted, and light to the bitter in Soul?* Let me tell you; Those things, that are looked on as the greatest earthly comforts, may become a mans Burthens and Afflictions.

Reas. 7. Man cannot make a perfect judgment of what is *good* for him, and so on the contrary what is *evil* for him in this life; because there are but few that have the right Art and way of judging of Conditions; and so are apt to call *good evil*, and *evil good*; and so are disabled from knowing what is *good* for a man in this life. I shall name some of those ways, by which most judge of the *good* or *evil* of a Condition.

- 1. Opinion.
- 2. Sense.
- 3. Affection.

I. Most judge of Conditions by Opinion; they take things to be as they account them. It is Opinion that makes things to be *good* and *evil*, to some, that, if rightly considered, are not so. Thus Conditions are looked upon as *good* or *evil*, according as they are in our Opinion. It was the saying of *Seneca*, *Levis est Dolor, si nil Opinio adjecerit*, The misery would be little, if our Opinion did not adde to it. Opinion is a leight judgment of things, by which things

things are *good* in the imagination, but never arrive at the understanding to be made *Reason*. It is an ill *Guide*, and therefore some call it the *Guide of Fools*, when *Reason* is the *Guide of the Wise*. Most men judg of Conditions by Opinion, and so it is impossible they should make a right Judgment of Conditions, of what is *good* or *evil* for a man in this life. And therefore, we find the Scripture setting it self to oppose and cross the Opinions of Men, in relation to what is *good* and *evil* for a man in this life.

Jam. 5. 1. Howl ye Rich Men, &c. Now it is the Opinion of most, that Rich men have cause to Rejoyce.

Prov. 15. 16. Better is a little with the Fear of the Lord, then great Treasures with Trouble. This crosseth the general Opinion of men.

Psal. 37. 16. A little that a Righteous man hath, is better then the Riches of many Wicked. Now the Opinion of the World is, That much, is alwayes better then little.

One place more, *Eccles. 7. 2, 3.*

Vers. 2. It is better to go to the House of Mourning, then to go to the house of Feasting. But most men think not so. *Vers. 3. Sorrow is better then laughter.* But this crosseth the general Opinion of men.

II. Another way by which men Judg of the *Good* or *Evil* of Conditions, is by *Sense*. They judg of the *good* & *evil* of things, according as they are pleasing or displeasing to their Senses. They judg of Conditions as many do of Meats, who judg of them by the taste, and so take them to be Wholsome that are Toothsome: And so, on the contrary, those meats Unwholsome that are Unpleasant. And therefore, the Apostle tells those, *Heb. 12. 11.* how they

were mistaken about their Condition, which was then a Suffering Condition; *No Affliction* (saith he) *for the present seemeth Joyous but Grievous*. Why, Sense at the present can feel no good in it, *But afterwards it bringeth forth the quiet Fruit of Righteousness*. This way of judging deceived *Eve*: She saw the Fruit was desirable, it looked fair to the Eye. Thus many are deceived about their Conditions. They are like the Book St. *John* eatt, As Honey in the Mouth, but in the Belly, as bitter as Gall. Thus men look upon Conditions, whether they are Honey in the Mouth; they look no further, whether they may not prove Gall in the Belly. Why, thus most judg of Conditions by Sense; and while they judg so, it is impossible for them to know, what is *good* or *evil* for them in this life.

I**I**. Some make a judgment of Conditions, by their sinfully-sensual Affections, and so account that good for them in this life, that suits with their Lusts and Inordinate Desires. Thus men come to be beguiled with the appearance of *Good*, instead of *Real Good*. Most men take the word of their Lusts; and corrupt and sinful Desires, concerning what is good for them. As *Sampson* said; *Give her me, for she pleaseth me well*. Since the Fall, man rather consults with his own Corrupt desires then any thing else, and makes them his Oracle; at which, he enquires about the *good* and *evil* of things: and while they seek to that Oracle, it must needs follow, that *Good* must be rejected under the Notion of *Evil*, and *evil* lookt upon as desirable under the Notion of *good*. Affections sensually-sinful, are wofully blinded in judging of Conditions.

CHAP. IV.

HAVING Explained and Confirmed the Point, I come now to Resolve some Questions, that may be put, in Relation to the Truth delivered.

1. *Question*, Whether it be lawful to Pray against *Afflictions*, Since no man knoweth what is *good* for a man in this life; and so in praying against them, we may Pray against, and Deprecate that, that (for ought we know) may be for our *Good*?

2. *Quest.* Whether it be lawful to Pray for outward and worldly good things, as Riches, &c. Since we know not, but we may pray for what is *evil* for us?

3. *Quest.* Whether our being ignorant of what is *good* for us in this life, doth not warrant us, to undertake things, and adventure on them hand over head, or at hap-hazard (as we say) or at adventure, without any Circumspection, Consideration, Prudential Foresight or Providential Care, as in Marriage, &c. Why, some may say; I know not what is *good* for me in this life, and therefore, Let it happen how it will. So the Question is, Whether this Truth, do not deny and destroy all Care of Providence?

I shall Answer to these in order.

1. *Quest.* Whether, according to the Truth delivered, it be lawful for a man to Pray against *Afflictions*, Since he knoweth not but that he may Pray

against his own *good*. Since, some by Experience have found, It was *good*, for them that they were *Afflicted*.

Ans. Some have bin of this Opinion, that, It is unlawful to Pray against *Afflictions*; and that it was not the Errour of *Tertullian*, to say, *Afflictions* were to be sought for, and desired; and said, That men ought to be so far from praying against them, that they ought to pray for them and desire them. But this I look upon, as one of his Errours.

I shall give an *Answer* to the *Question*.

{ 1. General.

{ 2. Particular.

I. General. So I Answer; That, notwithstanding it so falls out that *Afflictions* are *good* for a man, yet they may be lawfully prayed against. And this Truth I shall clear up to you, by four things.

1. *Afflictions* are, in their own Nature, Fruits and Effects of Sin, and such as Nature abhors; such are Sicknes, Poverty, all sorts of Losses and Crosses; they were brought in by Sin. The Apostle saith, *Rom. 5. 12. Sin entred into the world, and Death by Sin.* Death is there put for, All Miseries. As Life in Scripture is put for all Good; so Death is the Topick for all Miseries, being called *the King of Fears*; and so the King of Evils, being the King of whatsoever is fearful to man, and what Nature abhorreth. As Death, so all Evils (as Death's attendants) came into the world by Sin. Sin was the Mother, and *Afflictions* of all sorts are the Daughters. So then, looking upon them under this Notion, as the Effects of Sin, they may be prayed against. When Sin came into the world, these Evils crowded in with It; and when Sin shall be no more, these Miseries and

and Evils shall be no more, *Rev. 21. 4. There shall be no more Death, &c.* The Thred followeth the Needle. Sin was the Needle, that drew in with it the Thred of Miseries and Afflictions. Man had never known what Losses, and Crosses, and Miseries, and Afflictions had bin, had it not been for Sin.

2. *Afflictions* of themselves, do us no good; of themselves, they do not make a man better. The Good by *Afflictions* comes from a Superiour Work, from those admirable Influences and Concurrences of the Spirit of God, on, and with, the *Afflictions*. As our Saviour said, *Man lives not by Bread only*: So, man is not amended by *Afflictions* only. Put a Stone into the Fire, it cometh out a Stone still. No water, either hot or cold, will make a *Black-more* White. Empty Vinegar from Vessel to Vessel, it will be Vinegar still. So, let a man be employed, from Condition to Condition, he is still the same. We know, the Plough breaks up the Earth, but of it self doth not better it; it leaveth it as it was, there is nothing put in by the Plough: If the Husbandman Dung it, and cast in good Seed, when he hath broken it up with his Plough, then there is like to be a Harvest, else there is nothing but Weeds and Nettles. The Plough of Afflictions may break our Bodies, and Estates, and Spirits; but there will be no Harvest without something more, without an Heavenly Influence; Afflictions will bring forth only Briars and Thorns. The Expression of the Psalmist, is, *Psal. 94. 12. Blessed is the Man whom thou chastenest and teachest out of thy Law*. It is then happy, when Correction and Instruction go together.

3. As Afflictions are fruits of Sin, and of themselves

selves do no good ; so oftentimes, through Mans Corruption, they prove occasions of Sin. They are so far from making men Better, that they often make men Worse. I have shewed before, what Evils are incident, both to a state of Prosperity and Adversity. Satan knoweth, how to make Afflictions to become Temptations : And therefore we find this to be the Reason, why *Agur* prayed against Poverty, *Prov. 30. 9. lest I be Poor and Steal, and the Name of God be taken in Vain* ; q. d. Poverty may put me under a Temptation of using Unlawful means, to the Dishonour of God. Thus, Afflictions prove sometimes occasions of Sin ; and we are taught to Pray, *That we may not be led into Temptation.*

4. Consider again this, That the Saints and Servants of God have prayed against Afflictions : So, they have prayed for

1. The Preventing of them, and Keeping them off.
2. The Removing them, and Taking them off.

1. For the Preventing them, and keeping them Off. Thus did *Agur*, *Prov. 30. 8, 9.* where you have his Prayer ; First, Against the Evils of Sin, *Ver. 7. Take from me Vanity and Lying.* Next, Against the Evils of Affliction, *Ver. 8. Give me not Poverty.*

2. They have prayed for the Removing them, and taking them off. And those have done it, who got as much good by their Afflictions, as any under Heaven. Thus *David*, *Psal. 39. 10. Take away thy Stroke from me.* *Psal. 119. 22. Turn away Shame and Reproach from me.* Thus did *Job*, *Job 9. 34. Let him take away his Rod from me.* *Job 13. 20, 21.*

2c, 21. *Withdraw thine Hand from me, &c.* Where, he Prayeth for Gods taking away his Afflicting Rod, and for his with-drawing his Afflicting Hand. And these Two men, got as much good by their being Afflicted, as ever any did.

Thus, in General, You see what we Answer to the Question, Whether Evils of Affliction may be Prayed against?

I I. We come to give a more particular Answer to the Question; And tell you, That though we say, It is Lawful to pray against Afflictions; yet it must be with the Observation of some Rules; and Cautions, and Directions. That, as our Saviour said in another case concerning Hearing; *Take heed, how ye Hear*; So in this case of praying against Afflictions, we say, *Take heed how ye Pray*. So consider; There is a double praying against Afflictions, as I told you before:

1. For the Keeping them off.

2. For the Taking them off.

1. For the Keeping them off. So, there is a Two-fold praying for the Keeping off Afflictions.

1. Absolute.

2. Conditional, and with Submission.

1. *Absolute*. When men Pray, that, in no Case, the Evil may happen to them; so making their Will a Law to God's. This praying against *Afflictions*, is Unwarrantable and Unlawful. We must know; for Moral Evils of Sin, we may pray absolutely against, but not so against the Evils of *Affliction*.

2. There is a Praying against them, that is Conditional, & with Submission to the Will of God; This is Lawful. Our Saviour himself prayed that the Cup might

might pass from Him, but adds this, *Not my Will, but Thine be done.* Our praying against *Afflictions* is then right, when there is a sweet Submission of our wills, to the Will of God: So, that though we know that *Afflictions* are grievous to our Natures; yet, because we know not, what the Decrees and Purposes of God are concerning us; and not knowing, but that He may see them *good* for us, and make them *good* to us: we do sweetly submit our wills, to the Will of God, and Proclaim Liberty to Him, to deal with us as He please. And herein is the Work of Grace seen, that, though Nature desireth wholly to be freed from them, (they being such things as are bitter to It,) yet a Christian leaveth himself wholly to the Will of God, and saith, *Not my Will, but Thine be done.* When Christians see the Cup of Affliction preparing for them, or coming towards them, they must pray against it, only as our Saviour did. It is then right, when in praying against Afflictions, we pray absolutely that God may be Glorified; but for the things that concern our selves, we pray with Submission to His Will. Thus Christ did, *John 12. 27, 28. Save me from this Hour, but for this cause came I to this Hour. Father, Glorify thy Self.* Our Saviour is absolute in that request of his, That His Father would Glorify his Name, and received an Answer; But for the other Request, he sweetly submitted to His Father's Will. Thus doth a Gracious Heart pray absolutely, that God may be Glorified, (let it be in Relation to himself) which way the Lord please. Thus in desiring freedom from Affliction, though a Gracious Heart looks upon it as desirable to Nature, to be freed from Losses, and Crosses, Sicknes, and Poverty, &c:
Yet

Yet he looks upon Gods Glory as, That, that is to preferred before its own worldly Welfare, Ease, Quiet, Contentment, and Comfort. Whereas some may say, that *Agur* prayed absolutely against Poverty, *Prov. 30. 8, 9. Give me not Poverty, &c.* We Answer, that though it looketh like an absolute Request, yet it is not: If we look upon the Reason of the Request, *Vers. 9.* we shall find that he prayed absolutely, only in relation to Gods Glory. For, the Reason why he prayes against poverty, is this, *lest I be Poor and Steal, and the Name of God be taken in Vain.* Where see, that he only prayeth against Poverty upon this account, lest it might occasion him to Sin, and Dishonour God. *Agur* doth not say, lest I be poor and Steal, and be Whipt, and Stockt, or Hanged; but, *lest the Name of God be taken in Vain.*

2. Concerning the keeping off, of Afflictions. There is a praying either against,

1. The Things themselves.
2. The Evil of the things.

1. Against the Things themselves. For that, we say, as formerly, We ought not to pray Absolutely, but with Submission.

2. There is a praying against the Evil of the things. So we may pray absolutely against the Evil of the Evils, though we may may not pray absolutely against the Afflictions, yet against the Sting of the Affliction. The Apostle *Paul*, calleth Sin, the Sting of Death; and it is the Sting of every Affliction: and against the Sting, we may pray absolutely.

Thus for the first, concerning praying for the keeping off of Afflictions.

2. Con-

2. Concerning praying for the taking off Afflictions. So, these Rules are to be observed.

1. We must not put our wills, as a Law to God's. Then it is right, when, while we desire God to remove the Affliction, we get our hearts willing to bear the Affliction, if God will have it so.
2. In praying for the removal of them, there must be a Submission to the Will of God, in relation to all Circumstances; to wit, the time and manner of removing. We must submit to his Wisdom for the means, and be content to wait his Leasure, for the time of taking them off.
3. We must choose rather Affliction, than Sin; and pray more for the taking away of Sin, than the taking off Affliction. It was a *Pharoah* that prayed only for the taking off of Affliction, *Exod. 10. 17. Pray to the Lord your God, that He may take away from me, this Death only.* He was only, for having his Judgment taken away, not his Sin.
4. We must pray more, for God's Sanctifying Afflictions to us, than for his Removing them from us. That the Rod may do its work for which it is sent, before it be taken off; that we may be better'd by the Affliction, before we are freed from the Affliction.

Thus in Answer to the First Question.

CHAP. V.

The Second Question.

IF a Man know not, *What is good for a man in this Life*; Is it then Lawfull for a man to pray for the things of this Life, viz. Riches, &c? Since he knoweth not, but they may be Hurtful for him. His prosperity may be his Ruine, his Table may be his Snare; and that which he thought was for his Welfare, may become his Trap. To this Question I shall give an Answer

1. In General.
2. More Particular.

I. In General, I Answer thus: That it is Lawfull to pray for the things of this Life; although we know not, whether they are *good for Man in this Life*. There are these Arguments to make it good.

1. Riches, and Health, and the Comforts of this Life, are in themselves Blessings of God. They flow from Him, who is the Fountain of Good; and are, in themselves, Streams that issue from that Fountain, and speak His Goodnesse. They are some of those things, by which, He that is Good (as the Psalmist speaks) *doth good to his Creatures*. Acts 14. 17. *God left not Himself without Witness, in that he did Good, and gave them Rain, and Fruitful Seasons; filling their hearts with Joy and Gladness.* So, upon that account, they may be pray'd for.

2. The things of this Life may be prayed for,
In

In that our Saviour hath taught us to pray for *our Daily Bread*. Where, by Bread, is meant all those Good things that are necessary for this Life. Bread is there a Comprehensive word, being *the Staff of Life*; And so call'd *the Staff of Bread*. And by a Synecdoche it is put for All, both Necessary and Comfortable supports of mans Life. Now, being to pray for *our Daily Bread*, we may pray for what is Necessary and Comfortable for Life.

3. Outward Good things are necessary for our Uses, and for our Well-being in this World. *Mat. 6. 32. Your Heavenly Father knoweth, that you have need of all these things.* In Prayer, there is a making known of our Needs and Wants to God; not only Spiritual, but Temporal too; not only those that relate to our Souls, but also to our Bodies. The Apostle bids us, *Phil. 4. 6. In nothing be careful, but let your Wants be made known to God.* Then no doubt, but we may Lawfully pray for all Comfortable, and Suitable supplies to our Wants.

4. These Outward things do not of themselves Hurt. Of themselves they make none Evil. Outward things are to Men, as they are to Them. It is not from the things Themselves, but from Lusts within that they become Evil. The Poyson is not in the Flower, but in the nature of the Spider: So the Evil of Outward things, is not in the things Themselves, but from our Lusts, that turn them into Evil. It is not mens Possessions, but mens Corruptions that make them to become Evil to them. When a mans Table comes to be his Snare, the Creatures are not to be blamed, but a mans own Lusts. The Apostle, *2 Pct. 1. 4.* speaks of the Corruptions
 ons

bns that are in the world through Lust. The World,
 and the things of the world are the Object; but
 the Cause why they become Evil to us, is Lust.
 The Fault, why men are Covetous, or Sensual,
 or Effeminate, is not in Gold, or Wine, or Women;
 but in Mens Sensual Affections; and naughty Dis-
 positions. So it is Observable, when St. John,
 1 John 2. 16. doth Sum up, what of the World is
 opposite to the Love of God, He doth not name
 the Objects, but the Lusts. He doth not say, What
 ever is in the World is Pleasure, or Honour, or
 Profit; but he names, *The Lusts of the Eye, The*
Lusts of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life; And these
are not of the Father, but are of the World. (i. e.)
 These are not of God, as Riches, and Honour,
 and outward things are; but of that world, that
 man hath made within himself, by his own Cor-
 rupt desires, and Sensual Lusts and Affections. By
 this you see, The Evil is not in the things them-
 selves; but in our selves; We find, they are such
 things as are Consistent with Grace and Holiness.
 We read of *Abrahams* and *Jobs* Wealth and Riches.
 St. *Austin*, speaking of these Worldly things saith,
Dantur bonis ne putentur mala, dantur malis ne pu-
tentur summa bona. It is a certain Truth, That
 God never giveth any thing in it self Evil, to those
 that are Good; so, neither doth he give the chief-
 est good Things, to those that are Evil. So that
 when these things become Evil to men, it is from a
 mans own Corruptions. When men make these
 things, the Bellows of Pride, the Fewel of Un-
 cleanness, the Instruments of Revenge; This is
 not from themselves, but mans making use of them
 for such ends, for which they were not Ordained.

So when the Gospel calls upon us, to Renounce the World, The meaning is not, That we should cast the things of the World out of our Possession, but out of our Affection. To be Rich, is not Inconsistent with Religion, - it is mans abusing of Riches, &c. that makes them Evil to us.

5. The things of this life, may be helps to Christians, to further them in doing *good*: though they be seeming hindrances; yet, by a wise Improvement, they may become great Advantages, for the performing of Works both of Piety and Charity. If a man have but the Art, of placing these things aright, They may help a man toward Heaven. As we see it is with a Trunk of Mony; Let a man put it upon his Head, it boweth him down; But let him put it under his Feet, it listeth him up. 'Tis the Apostle's Command, in 1 Tim. 6. 18. to those that are Rich, *that they be Rich in Good Works*; Letting them know, That they have an opportunity put into their hands, of doing good with their Wealth. See what our Saviour saith; Luke 16. 9. *Make you Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon*. But, why doth our Saviour call it, The unrighteous Mammon? Not because Riches are so in themselves, but because of mens either Evil getting, or using of them. *q. d.* Things that many men abuse, and so make them the Riches of Iniquity; may be so employed, as to be helps to further *good*. And therefore, it was a hard saying, and Censure of a Father (although I confess it is sometimes true) *Omnis Dives aut iniquus, aut iniqui Heres*, Every Rich man is either an Oppressor, or the Son of an Oppressor.

6. Wealth and Riches, and the Things of this Life,

Life, are the things that come within a Promise. It is said of him that feareth the Lord, *Psal. 112. That Wealth and Riches shall be in his House* (i. e.) when God seeth it good for him. For all Temporal Promises must be understood with an Exception. The Rule is this, concerning such Promises, That they do not Intimate what ever shall be, but what ever befalleth a Godly man shall be a Blessing. The Fruit of a Promise, shall not be the Fruit of a loser Providence; but to a Godly man, they are the Fruits of a Promise, and therefore may be prayed for.

Thus for the Answer in General.

II. The Particular Answer is this. Though we said, and have shewed, that it is lawful to pray for outward things, yet it must have its Rules and Limitations, and that upon this Ground, That we know not what is good for a man in this life. Concerning praying for outward things, we must know this, they must not be prayed for;

1. Absolutely.
2. Ultimately.

1. Absolutely. In praying for outward things, we must not pray for them, but with a Submission to the Will of God. In praying for them, we must take heed of making our wills a Law to God's. For, as I shewed you before, That the Evils of this life, are not Evils to be absolutely prayed against; so neither are the things of this life, absolutely to be prayed for. Then it is Right, if, when you are begging of them, you can find in your heart to be without them, if God will have it so. As for those Good things that relate to another Life, they are

to be absolutely prayed for; but, for the things of this life, we are not to do so; we must not so desire them, as not content to be denied. This was *Rachels* sin, in her desire of children, *Give me Children or else I dye*. She would have no Nay, but she must have children, and she payed dear for it, for she died in Child-bearing; she would die if she had not children, and she died in bringing forth a child, whom she called *Benoni*. Thus *Israel* would have no Nay, but they must have a King. And thus the hearts of many, are so set upon the things of this life, that they cannot brook a denial of them; and think God doth not love them, if He do not grant those Requests they make for them.

2. In praying for outward things, as you may not pray for them Absolutely, so you are not to pray and seek for them, Ultimately, but to make them Subordinate to Gods Glory. It is lawful to pray for Health, and Wealth, and the good things of this Life; but it is to be done, with a respect to the Glory of God, that we may be enabled the better, to Serve and Honour Him with them; and not that our sensual desires, and sinful lusts, may be satisfied, *Jam. 4. 3*. The Apostle telleth us, of some that did Ask; but he telleth us, that their End was not right; for they did ask, that they might consume it upon their Lusts. This asking is Evil and Unlawful. How many are there, that would have God bestow that upon them, that they would bestow upon their Lusts, as Health, and long Life; that they may live the more Pleasantly, Wealth, that they may fare Deliciously every day; Great Estates, that they may Raise Themselves and Families, that they may be some-body in the world,
and

and may lord it over others. It is not right, when men desire outward things, that they may live more comfortably, and not Serve God more chearfully.

Quest. But some may Ask, How may I know, in praying for the things of *this Life*, that I have a respect to Gods Glory; since the Heart of man is so Deceitful?

Ans. By these things, it may be known.

1. He that makes Gods Glory his End, in seeking these things, is as much in begging Grace to Use them for God, as he is to have them. Where the desires of a man, after these things, are right, they are not single desires after the things themselves, but conjoyned and coupled with desires of Grace; whereby he may be enabled to serve and honour God with them. This is his most earnest Request, That, if God put any such price into his Hand, he would give him a Heart to make use of it for his Glory. *Prov. 3. 9. Honour God with thy Substance.* So, this is the great Request of those that eye the Glory of God, in their begging the things of *this life*; That, if God see it good to bestow those things on them, that he would give them to honour Him with their Riches, with their Health, and with all their Worldly Enjoyments. When it is otherwise, our praying for them is not right. There are many that only look after the things themselves, but never begg for Grace, by which they should make a right Improvement of them. Then it is right, when a man desireth rather to be denied the Things themselves, than Grace to use them; when he can say, *Lord give me not Riches, give me not Ho-*

now, give me not *Worldly Possessions*, if thou do not withall give me a Heart to use them to thy *Glory*.

2. This speaketh it, When a man can take a Denial, and be content to go Without them, when God will have it so. This sheweth man's respecting the *Glory of God*, above the things themselves. Such an one sits down contented, when God is pleased to cross his desires, and to deny him his requests: When he beggeth Health, and Wealth, and the good things of this life, and is denied; he layeth his hand upon his mouth, and concludeth, that, God did not see those things to make for his *Glory*, nor for the good of him that begged them. We read of *Balaam*, Num. 22. when he was sent for by *Balak*, that he gave out, he would not eye the offers that *Balak* made him, but only the Command of God. Yet, when he was told, He should not go, he enquires again, and again, till at last God bid him go; which shews, he eyed more the Promotion and Advancement he expected from *Balak*, then the Command of God. So some, in seeking the things of this life, are so impatient, that, though the Lord have denied them once, and again, yet they will be asking them again; It is good for men to do so, in seeking after the things of another life, but not in seeking after the things of this life.

3. This speaketh it, When, in praying for the things of this Life, he prayes only for such a measure and proportion of them, as may least expose him to sin. By this, a man shews, in seeking of them, he hath en eye to the Honour and *Glory of God*. Such an one seeks not great things for himself, but only what is convenient. It was *Agur's* prayer, Prov. 30.8.

Prov. 30. 8. That God would feed him with food convenient. If you ask, why he prayed for convenient Food, and a convenient Estate, the Reason was this, Because he saw danger in extreames; in Poverty on the one hand, and Riches on the other. He saw, To be very Rich, or very Poor, was very dangerous, and would put under great Temptations. *q. d.* Lord I would not be Rich, because it is hard to be Rich and Good; and I would not be poor, because it is hard to be poor, and not to sin. Therefore he prayeth for such an Estate as did best suite with holiness, and would least expose him, to temptations unto sin; this speaks his eying the Glory of God. He prayeth against Riches, and abundance, but it is not upon this account, because they may make a man envied, or cause cares and troubles, for he that encreaseth Riches, increaseth them: But it is purely upon another account, (*viz*) the Glory of God, as appears by his Reason given, *vers. 9. Lest I be full and forget Thee,* and say, *Who is the Lord?* Which shews, that it was Gods Honour and Glory, that he did Respect. So when he prayeth against Poverty, he doth not make this his Reason, *lest I be despised and trodden under foot,* but, *lest the Name of my God be taken in Vain.* So that what he prayed for, was in Relation to Gods Glory. So it is with him that eyes the Glory of God, in seeking the things of this life; he seeks not great things for himself, but only what is proportionable and convenient. He knows, A shoo too big for his foot, may hinder him in going, as well as a shoo that is too little: A Staff, you know, is a help to a man when he walketh; but a bundle of Staves, both hinder and

burden. It is good for men, in seeking the things of *this life*, to seek only what is fit and convenient, that they may be the better fitted to be serviceable to their God, and to *run the Race that is set before them*. Suppose a man were to run a Race, and many Suites were laid before him to take his choice, some of cloth of Gold, &c. he would not choose the most Gorgious, but the most Convenient, lest otherways he lose the Race.

Quest. Some may Ask, What is a convenient Estate?

Answer :

1. That which Nature requireth. Nature is content with a little. It was the Saying of a Wise man, *He that liveth according to Nature, will find a little, Enough; and He that liveth according to Opinion, will never have Enough.* And it was the Saying of a Gracious man, *Having Food and Rayment, let us therewith be Content.*
2. That is Convenient, that is suitable to the Estate wherein God hath put us. Some need not so much as others do; and it is their Happiness, if they knew it; as it is for a man to see without Spectacles, and to walk without Crutches. It was the saying of *Socrates*, when he saw great Riches carried through a Town, *How happy am I, that I can live without all this?*
3. That is Convenient, that is requisite for the comfortable Maintenance of our Families. The Apostle saith, *He that Provideth not for his own House, is worse than an Infidel.* Yet *Solomon* saith, *There was a man,*

man, That had neither Son, nor Brother, and yet there was no end of his Labours.

4. This speaketh our respecting Gods Glory, in our seeking the things of *this life*, Our using the Things for God, when he hath bestowed them on us, and hath granted us our desire. Do you not spend them upon your Lusts? Do you not say to the Wedge of Gold, *Thou art my Confidence?* Do you not make them the Fuel for Lusts, and Instruments of Revenge? You may know, what your Hearts were in Desiring them, by the Use you afterwards make of them. Remember, Lust is an earnest Craver; and will pretend, That what it begs, is for God, till it hath what it desireth. It is good for Christians then, to put the Question to themselves, *What God hath the more from them, for that they have received from Him?*

To close up the Answer to this Question; Let me tell you, Although it be lawful to pray for the things of *this life*; yet not *Principally* and *Primarily*, but with respect to the Inferiority of their Nature and Uses. Remember still, These are not the Chief things to be sought after. *Mat. 6. 33. Seek first the Kingdom of God, &c.* We ought, in our Prayers, to give the precedence, and pre-eminence to Spiritual good things. Heavenly things are to be preferred before Earthly; and we are to place them in our Prayers, as God hath placed them. Though we may Lawfully pray for the things of *this life*, yet we pray Unlawfully, when we are more earnest for them, than for the things that relate to *another life*. God took it well from *Solomon*, when he was left to his choice,
and

and bid to ask what he would, he only asked *Wisdom*. He did not ask Riches, nor Long Life, nor the Life of his Enemies. Yet God gave him Those. The way to have the things of this World, is, chiefly to seek after the things of another World. These things you may pray for Absolutely, viz. Grace, and an Interest in Christ, and Pardon of Sin, and all Soul - Mercies; and all the Good things that relate to *another life*. We read of some, in *Hos. 7. 14.* that *howled upon their Beds, for Corn and Wine*. Those were the things they only sought after; and their Prayers was but a brutish Crie, compared to the *howling of a Dog*. A gracious Soul pants after the things of another Life, when others pant only after the things of this Life. The Prophet speaks of such, *Amos 2. 7.* who pant after the *Dust of the Earth*: But David's Soul panted after God, *Psal. 42. 1.* *So panteth my Soul after Thee, O God*. Then it is Right, when we pray for the things of this Life, with a serious consideration of their Lowness, and Baseness, and Inferiority, being compared with the things of Eternity, and another Life.

[Thus for the second Question.

The Third Question, is This:

WHether our being Ignorant of *What is good for us in this Life*, doth not warrant to adventure on, and undertake things (as we say) Hand Over-head, or at all Adventure; without
Circ-

Circumspection, Consideration, prudential Foresight, or providential Care. As in the business of Marriage, and of managing all our businesses and affairs in this Life. Some may say, I see I know not *what is good for me in this life*: And therefore, the thing I am about, notwithstanding all my Prudence, and Care, and Circumspection, may (for ought I know) be for Evil to me; and, without all this Care and Circumspection, may be for Good to me. So the Question is, Whether this Truth doth not destroy all Prudential and Providential care about the management of the Affairs of this Life.

Answer. No such matter: It makes nothing against that. And that, we shall shew in these following Propositions; which I shall briefly name.

1. Divine Providence doth not destroy Humane Prudence; Which is so much commended by *Solomon*, in his Book of the *Proverbs*.
2. Gods Providence doth sometimes make up mans Improvidence. But that is no warrant at all, for a man therefore to be Improvident.
3. It is a Tempting of God, when we neglect the Means, for bringing to passe the End.
4. It is creating Crosses to our selves; and, for which we must only thank our selves. We are not called to bear Crosses of our own making, but of God's sending.
5. It is made one of the Characters of a
Righte-

Righteous man, That he guides his Affairs
with Discretion, *Psalm. 112. 5.*

6. There is almost a whole Chapter spent in the Commendation of a Virtuous Woman's Prudential and Providential care in providing for her Husband, Children, and Family; as you may see, *Prov. 31.*
7. Such a Conclusion would justify that prophane Saying of some, *That if they are Ordained to be saved, they shall be Saved, let them live as they list.* These separate between the Means and the End. When as God hath appointed the Means as well as the End. So do such, in respect of the Affairs of this Life; that lay aside Prudence, And say, *If God see it good for me, it shall be Good.*

Thus for the Third Question,

CHAP. VI.

The Application.

IT is useful by way of Information. If this be true, that no man infallibly knows what is good for a man in this life; why, then it is not to be wondred at, that we find men so wofully mistaken in their Judgments, about Conditions, and God's outward Dispensations. The Prophet speaks of some, that call *evil good*, and *good evil*: So man, through his ignorance, of what is good for him in this life; is apt to think that condition good for him, that is *evil*; and that condition *evil* for him, that is *good*. We read *Job 11. 10. Vain man would be wise*. So, ignorant man would be thought wise, in the knowing of things that are above him, and beyond his line, and that come not within the Sphear of his knowledg. Though he know not, how to make a Judgment of Conditions, yet he will be offering at it; nay as confidently undertake it, as Astrologers and Gypsies do, to tell people their Fortunes. But we may say of men in this case, as the Apostle doth of those, *Rom. 1. 22. Professing themselves to be wise, became fools*. So while men profess themselves to be so wise, as to know what is good for a man in this life, they have but shewed themselves fools; as hath appeared by their gross mistakes about Conditions. The Heathens of old, though they thought themselves wise, yet shewed themselves fools in their Opinions, concerning the *Chiefest Good*, (which did amount to the number of 288.)

And

And such fools do men shew themselves in their Opinions, concerning inferiour *good things*, and what is *good* for a man in this life. But, as the Lord saith of the customs of the people, *Jer. 10. 3. That they are Vain*: So, may we say of the Opinions of people, concerning conditions. *Solomon* speaks of some, *Eccles. 7. 10.* who would undertake to make a Judgment of Times, and did ask, *Why were the former times better than these?* But *Solomon* telleth such, *They did not enquire wisely concerning them.* (i. e.) They were but fools in thinking so. So there are many that inquire not wisely concerning conditions, and what is *good* and *evil* for a man in this life.

I shall acquaint you with three sorts of persons, that are thus mistaken about outward Conditions.

1. Some there are, that, looking upon Honour and Riches, and such things as are in themselves good, from thence conclude, They are things good for them; and if they have them, conclude it is well with them.
2. Some there be, who looking upon Afflictions, as things evil in themselves; conclude from thence, that it is evil for them in this life, that they are Afflicted.
3. Some there are, who hearing that it hath been good for some that they have been Afflicted, do from thence conclude, that, because they are Afflicted, their condition is good. Thus there are some, that think the better of themselves, for their being Afflicted.

I shall speak somewhat, to shew, How all these may be mistaken.

1. For the first. Some there are, that think, because Honour, and Riches, &c. are good things in themselves, that therefore they are good for them. Give me leave to shew you, How wofully such persons may be mistaken in doing of it. I shall present you with some of those false Grounds and Principles, upon which such go, who make such a judgment; (*viz.*) Four,

1. That must needs be good for a man in this life, that is in it self, and in its own nature good.
2. That must needs be good for man in this life, that suits with, and answers to, a mans desires.
3. That must needs be good for a man in this life, that hath been good for others.
4. That must needs be good for a man in this life, that God gives and bestows upon a man in this life.

I shall spend a little time, in the examining these Grounds, to see whether such a Conclusion may be built upon them.

1. The First is this. That must needs be good for a man in this life, that is in it self good.

Ans. It follows not : That which is good in its self, may be a convenient good for me, or you, or other. That, that makes a good thing, to be a convenient good to us, is its suitableness to, and agreeableness with, our Constitutions, Spirits, and Dispositions. Here is the mistake of many, that when they hear, that Honour, and Riches, &c. are things

things good in themselves, they presently conclude they are good for them; without considering, whether they are a convenient good, never examining how they suit with their Spirits and Dispositions. The Apostle, speaking of the Creatures, that God hath made and ordained, for the nourishment and preservation of mankind, telleth us, *1 Tim. 4. 4. That every Creature of God is good*: So, Flesh is good, and Fish is good, and Wine is good: yet we know, it may not be good for some to eat Fish, & for some to drink Wine; Wine, that is in it self good, yet it is not good for him that is in the fit of a Fever. So that here lieth the mistake, Men distinguish not, between what is good in it self, and good for them. Thus it is with most; they look upon the things of this life, without themselves, but look not inward upon their own Spirits and Dispositions; which *Agur* no doubt did, when he prayed against Riches, and that God would feed him with food convenient.

2. Consider this, That a thing may be good in it self, that may become evil to a man in this life, through his Abuse of it; and therefore it followeth not, that, that is alwayes good for a man in this life, that is good in it self: Things good in themselves, may through mans corruption be abused. The Apostle *Jude*, speaketh of some, *that turn Grace, into Wantonness*: And if the corruption of man may rise so high, to abuse that, that is placed in the highest Rank of good things; then much more, to abuse those good things, that are of a lower and inferiour nature. It is observable, that we are most apt to offend in *licitis*, in those things that are in themselves lawful; because we are there least suspi-
cious

cious of danger. We suspect not the things, because they are in themselves good, which, through our abuse of them, become evil to us. The Flowre is in its own nature, sweet and good, but through the Venemous nature of the Spider, what is drawn from it, is turned into Poyson. So it is in this case, mens corruptions make those things Evil and Poysonous, that are in themselves good. We must know, Outward things are to us, as we are to them; our outwards, are according to what our inwards are; things good in themselves, become evil to us, when through our corruptions, they are made to be but food and fewel for our Lusts. It may be said of many, It was ill for them, that they were so Great, and so Rich; had they not been so, they had not been so bad, and so wicked. *Solomon saith, The prosperity of fools, destroyeth them.* One of the Fathers, wrote thus to one, *Monacho fervido, Abbatu tepido, Episcopo frigido, Archiepiscopo dissoluto.* To the Zealous Monk, the luke-warm Abbot, the cold Bishop, and the dissolute Arch-Bishop. Thus we see, that some are the worse for their outwards.

Thus for the first Ground of mens mistakes about Conditions. Now for the second.

2. Ground of mens mistakes about Conditions, is this, That must needs be good for a man in this life, that pleaseth him, and suits with his desires. And hereupon many do infer this, That it must needs be good for them in this life, since it is that they desire. Now I shall shew you, how wofully-mistaken such persons may be concerning their condition, that say, It is as I would have it.

Consider this, That a man's having what his heart desireth, doth not at all, speak the person good. For we shall find, in *Psal. 73*. That those were as bad, as bad could be, that yet had what heart could wish. It doth not alwayes speak, that that is good for us, which falleth out according to our desires. Mens desires may be corrupt, and inordinate, and carried out after things that are evil for them. We read of the Israelites, *Psal. 78. 29*. They required meat for their lusts, (and see what followeth) they had their heart's desire. But by the event, you will find, it was not good for them. So by this you see, this is a false ground that men go upon, in making a Judgment of Conditions. And this the very Heathens saw by light of nature. *Philip of Macedon*, had on one and the same day a Son born; the winning of a Prize, by his Chariots, at the *Olympian Games*; and a Victory his Army had the same day obtained. He was so daunted with the News being so good, that he feared a mischief would ensue; and therefore desired the Gods, to mix some Adversity with it. Remember, the things of this life, though they suit with our desires, are so far from being good for us, that it were good for us sometimes, that our desires were not granted. How many are there, that have blessed God for such a Providence! Providence doth sometimes crosse a man, and turn him out of the way of his desires, for his good. As *Possidonius*, in the life of *St. Augustine*, hath a memorable Story, He going to Visit a place, with his guide, mistook his way, and so escaped the hands of some bloody *Donatists*, that lay in wait to take away his life. God sometimes leads his people, out of the way of
their

their desires, for the avoiding of some danger, that may lie in the things desired.

Thus for the Second Ground, upon which men go, in making a Judgment of Conditions.

3. Ground upon which men go, in making a Judgment of Conditions, is this: That must needs be good for a man in this life, that hath been good for others. If they were good for *Abraham*, &c. Why may they not be good for me? And here I shall shew you, how upon this ground many are woefully mistaken about Conditions.

It follows not: I told you before, that the things of this life, are so to us, as we are to them. Those Godly Men that had those things, had hearts and spirits fitted for them. It doth not therefore follow, That we have. It is, as if a man should say, This Shoe fits such and such a mans foot, and therefore it will fit mine. We are not to look so much upon the condition, as the Graces that belong to the Condition. Had *Abraham* a prosperous condition? Consider withal, what Graces he, and others had, and see whether you have the same. There are Prosperity-Graces, and Adversity-Graces; without which, neither Prosperity or Adversity is good for a man. The condition was not simply good for them, but as they were furnished with such graces as made them fit for their condition. In a word, Consider this, The things of this life, as of themselves, they never did any man hurt; So, let me tell you, Of themselves they never did any man good, I say of themselves. Their doing a man good, cometh from a higher Good; and that is, Grace to Improve them for the Glory of God, and our

own and others good. There was never any man made better, by his being Rich; but many that have been Rich, have been the better for their being Gracious; with their being Rich.

4. Ground that men go upon, is this: That must needs be good for a man in this life, that God bestows upon a man in this life. But Honour, and Riches, &c. are God's Gifts and Dispensations; therefore must needs be good for a man in this life.

We shall a little examine this Ground, and shew how men may be woefully mistaken, that from those premises make such a conclusion. Their mistake lieth in this, Their not considering, How God is said to bestow these things.

1. They distinguish not, between what God giveth *ex Largitate* out of his Bounty; and as He is good to all: and what He giveth *ex Promisso*, by Promise. And the not considering of this, is one great cause of mens being mistaken, in making a judgment of a prosperous condition. So that, as our Saviour told the Sadduces in another case, That they did erre, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God. So we may say of these, That they erre, not knowing the Scriptures, and the Intentions of God in the bestowing outward things. While a man hath the things of this life, bestowed on him by God, only out of Bounty, he cannot say, They are good for him, till he find, they come in by Covenant and Promise, as I shall shew you more largely afterwards. When *Esa* asked *Jacob*, *Whose Children are these?* He answered, *These are the Children that God hath Graciously* (or, in Mercy) *given me.* No man can say, These are the Riches, and this is the Prosperity that God hath

in mercy given me, till he finds they flow from another Fountain, than that of general Bounty. *Luther* said of the *Turkish* Empire, That, how great soever it was, yet it was but a Crust, that the great House-keeper had cast to a Dog. Remember, it is the Covenant that forms a Mercy.

2. They distinguish not, between things in the Dispensation, and in the Intention of God. Hence ariseth the Mistake. Many judg of the Intention, by the Dispensation; and if such things be dispensed, that be in themselves good, they presently think they are intended for good to them. Whereas, *Salomon* telleth such, *Eccles. 9. 1. No man knoweth love by any outward thing, &c.* Not by Riches, nor Honour, nor by outward Prosperity. Gods Hand, and Gods, Heart doth not alwayes go together. His Hand may seem to make for men, when His Heart is against them; as on the contrary, His Hand may seem to be against men, when his Heart is not. We read, *Jer. 32. 41.* When God said, He would do his People good, *He would do them good with his whole Heart, and with his whole Soul.* We find, *Psal. 78. 29.* God-gave the Israelites their heart's desire, they had what they would; But see what followeth, *While the meat was yet in their mouths, the Wrath of God came upon them.* Remember this, The best good things of this life, may be bestowed in Anger, *Hos. 13. 11. I gave them a King in mine anger.*

3. They distinguish not, between Gods Giving Hand, and Gods Sanctifying Hand. Between the Things given, and Grace that fits for the Using of them. God sometimes gives the Things, when He gives not the Grace to make a Right use of them.

them. There are some, who, if they find but a Giving Hand, look no further, whether there be a Sanctifying Hand, or no. Know this, While you look upon a Giving Hand only, you can never make a right Judgement of a Prosperous condition, till you look upon the other Hand, viz. the Sanctifying Hand. Till you find, that with Prosperity, you have also Prosperity-Graces given too.

4. They distinguish not, between what cometh in by a Permissive providence, and by an Approving providence. As there is Gods Permissive and Approving Will, so it is in respect of Providences, as relating to the good things of this life. Some men have them onely by a permissive providence. Some there are that God maketh Rich, as it is said, God made *Abraham* Rich; some God permits to be Rich, and hindreth them not. Thus, some by sinful, and unjust, and unlawful Means, get the things of this life, when God approves not of it, *Hos. 8. 4.* God saith, *They sett up Kings, but not by Him; and Princes, but He knew it not.* The meaning is, That He approved it not. There is a disposition in men, (what course soever they take to compass the things of this life) to draw God unto a liking, and approbation of what they do, (let it be never so unlawfully done) As those, *Zach. 11. 5.* *Blessed be the Lord, for I am Rich.* How much do men father upon God, as his Gifts and Blessings, which they have got by their own injustice and oppression?

Objec. But some will say, Is it not the Blessing of the Lord that maketh Rich? And, if I am Rich, must I not say, It is by the blessing of the Lord?

Ans.

Answ. It is true, and the place, is, *of the Blessing of the Lord, it maketh Rich, and addeth no sorrow with it.* This is a truth. And yet it followeth not from hence, that, Those that have Riches, and outward things, have them as a Blessing. This will appear, if you consider, what is meant by *Rich* in the Text; It is not the having the things, but comfort, and contentment, in the things, that speaks men Rich. So you find, the latter words in the Text are Exegetical, and expound the former, (*viz.*) *He addeth no sorrow with it.* There are three Vultures that commonly feed upon a Rich mans heart, (*viz.*) Care in getting, Fear in keeping, and Grief in losing. But now the Blessing of the Lord, driveth away all these. So that it doth not follow, That the bare having of the things, is the Blessing, but the having the Riches of Contentment with them. So that the meaning is this, That it is the blessing of the Lord, that gives Comfort and Contentment with the things; and this is that indeed, that speaks a man truly Rich. Many have Gold and Silver, and Possessions in abundance, and cannot be said to be Rich, because they have not the comfortable use of them, and contentment with them. So that it is the Comfort and Contentment, that is that Blessing that maketh Rich.

Thus I have examined the Grounds, upon which many go, in making a Judgment of a Prosperous Condition. And from all that hath been said, their Mistakes will appear, by considering of these following Queries.

1. Who knoweth, or can say, That those things are good for a man in this life; that bad men have had, as well as good; and for the most part, the greatest portion of them? Upon this ground, the very Heathens were drawn to a contempt of those things, because they saw, that for the most part, they were in the hands of those, that were the worst of men. *Seneca* could say, Who would esteem of Riches and Honours, when he seeth them cast, *in hoc canum in has sordes*, upon such Dung-hills; speaking of Honours conferred upon *Sylla*. Who would esteem of Beauty, (saith another) which a Whore may have, as well as an honest Woman? *Jer.* 12. 1. The Prophet observed, *That the way of the Wicked did Prosper*. And *Psal.* 73. That the worst of Men, had waters of a full Cup wrung out to them, and had what heart could wish.

2. Who knoweth, or can say, That is good for a man in this life, that never made a man Good? Where is the man that can come forth and say, That his Riches and Honours, did ever change his heart or reform his life?

3. Who knoweth, or can say, That those things are good for a man in this life, that have made many men worse, through their Abuse of them? To how many have they become a Trap, and Snare, and occasions of Sin? How many men hath prosperity undone? *Nehem.* 13. 20. Did not *Solomon*, King of Israel, sin by those things? yet among many Nations there was none like him, Beloved of his God. How Conscientious was *David*, when he was *David* the Persecuted? but how careless, when he was *David* the King? It is observed of *ome*, That it was never more Wicked, then when it

it was most Flourishing. And it is observed of the Church, That it had least Purity, when it had most outward Prosperity.

4. Who knoweth, or can say, That those things are good for a man in this life, that are things so uncertain? They come and go, pass and run, like a River. The Apostle calls them uncertain Riches, *1 Tim. 6. 17. Solomon telleth us, They make themselves Wings, and fly away. Prov. 23. 5. Yea, their being is so short, that they are said not to be; for so saith Solomon in the same Vers. Why wilt thou set thy heart upon that which is not?*

5. Who knoweth, or can say, That is good for a man in this life, that cannot in the least cure a mans vanity, or adde any thing of worth, or excellency to him? When he hath all the things of the world, yet he is still but vain and empty Man; he is still *Adam*, weak, frail, fleshly, and still vain. Hence it is, that *Solomon* sheweth, that Riches cannot be a mans happiness, *Eccles. 6. 10. That which hath been, is named already, and it is known that it is Man: (i. e.)* Call him what you will, Great, or Rich, or Honourable; yet he is Man still, (i. e.) crazy, frail, mortal man; outward things do not amend his nature and constitution. This the Psalmist telleth us, *Psal. 39. 5. Surely, every man at his best estate, is altogether vanity. At his best estate, let him be never so happy, in respect of worldly estate, yet it doth not cure his vanity, he is still but vanity.*

6. Who knoweth, or can say, That that is good for a man in this life, that will do a man no good in the time of his greatest need, and straits, and exigencies? *Prov. 11. 4. Riches profit not in the day of*

of Wrath. And we have seen this made true in the former dayes of common Calamity. In all Changes, we have seen, The Greatest, were the greatest Sufferers. Great Winds, shake most the tallest Cedars, and throw down the strongest Oakes. We read, 2 Kings 24. *In that Captivity, the Richer Jews were carried away, when the poorer sort were left to till the land.*

7. Who knoweth, or can say, That that is good for a man in this life, that fills the life with so many cares, and exposeth to so many dangers, and troubles, and disquietments? How many are there, whose wealth hath cost them their lives? It had bin good for *Naboth*, he had had no Vineyard. And it was said of the Roman Emperours, That they got nothing by their Advancement, but *ut citius interficerentur*, That they might be killed the sooner. How many men are there, that had been happy, had not their prosperity destroyed them? And this is another Argument, that *Solomon* useth to prove, that a mans happiness lyeth not in Riches. As you may see *Eccles. 6. 11.* *Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?* So, How can those things, that increase cares and troubles, make Man the better? *Psal. 39. 6.* *Man disquiets himself in vain; he heapeth up Riches, and cannot tell, who shall gather them.* Nay, *Solomon* tells us, *Eccles. 5. 3.* *That he had seen Riches laid up for the owners, to their hurt.* *Antigonus* said of his Crown, That if a man knew what cares were wrapt up in it, he would not think it worth taking up. Nay, one saith of life it self, *Nemo vitam acciperet si daretur scientibus.*

8. Who can say, That is good for a man in this life,

life, that makes the entrance into Eternal Life so difficult? This our Saviour sheweth, *Luk. 18. 24, 25.* *That it is hard for a Rich man to enter into Heaven.* Nay, he makes it not only hard, but in a manner Impossible; When he saith, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a Needle.* Our Saviour meaneth it, of those that have Riches, and trust in them.

Thus for the first sort of persons, who think,
It is good for them in this life to have
Prosperity.

CHAP. VII.

THere are some think, Afflictions are ill for them in this life; and conclude, it is ill with them, because they are their Portion in this life. I am now to shew you, that many are wofully mistaken in that. I shall name to you five things, that men look upon as evil for them in this life. About which they may be deceived; and they may be for good to them.

1. God's hiding his Face from them.
2. God's suspending, and deferring his Answers to their prayers.
3. God's denying their particular suits.
4. God's depriving them of many dear comforts.
5. God's exercising them, with many sad, and great Afflictions.

We

We shall a little consider of these things; and whether men may not be mistaken about them, and take them to be evil for them, when they are not so.

1. Many think this evil for them, To have God hide his Face from them. And indeed, we find the Godly in Scripture, complain of it, as one of the saddest things. Yet let me tell you, such desertions, and the withdrawals of the light of Gods Countenance, for a time, may be for Good. That as Christ said to his Disciples, *It is good for you that I go away*. So it is sometimes good for the People of God, that He turns his Face away. Although it is not a pleasing good, yet it may be a profitable good.

1. By way of Correction. The Father's frowns are sometimes necessary, though the Children will not say so. The sleighting of Divine Favours, causeth God to withdraw His Favour, by way of Correction.

2. By way of Instruction. So His hiding His Face from his People, teacheth them these things.

1. Where their strength lyeth; That in His Light, they see Light: That He is the Fountain of Comfort, and that the happiness of lower Spirits, lieth in Him, who is the Chief of Spirits. How know you, that the Branch of the Tree hath nourishment from the Root? Pluck it away from the Tree, and it suddenly withereth. Let but the Nurse, leave the child to it self, and it quickly falleth.

2. It

2. It teacheth men to prize God more, and to long the more after Him. As in the Northern parts, where the Sun is long absent, people will get upon the tops of the Mountains, to espie and discover its arising; and happy is he, that can first see it. For this end, God sometimes hides His Face, that his People may with more longing, look after the breakings forth of the Light of His Countenance.

3. By way of Prevention. So God hideth His Face.

1. To prevent pride, and to keep His People humble.

2. To keep them from trusting in habits of Grace.

4. By way of Probation. So by this, God tryeth his concerning two things.

1. Whether they can love a hiding God?

2. Whether they can walk dutifully, when God walketh strangely? *Isa. 8. 17. I will waite upon Him, that hideth his face from the House of Jacob.* He resolved to walk dutifully, though God walked strangely.

Thus you see, that Gods hiding his Face from His people, may be for Good.

2. A second thing, that many look upon as Evil for them, is, God's suspending, and deferring Answers to their Prayers. Of this, the Godly have complained in Scripture, That they did Cry, and God did not Hear. And yet let me tell you, this may be for Good.

1. To

1. To make His people to be more earnest Suitors at the Throne of Grace. As we read of the Blind man in the Gospel, when he cryed to Christ to have mercy on him; and being rebuked, he cryed the more earnestly.
2. To make the Mercy, the more welcome when it cometh. Merchants look for the greatest return, by that Ship that is longest abroad. God keeps a mercy the longer in his Hands, to enrich it the more; and to send it forth, as a Bride adorned for her Husband. One cluster of grapes, when ripe, is better then many when they are green and sowre. *Abraham* waited long for a Son; but it was, that his Son might be the greater Blessing to him.
3. This is that, some look upon as evil for them in this life; Gods denying them their particular suits. God is pleased sometimes, not only to delay His Answers to our Requests; but also to deny them: and yet this may be for good. God alwayes heareth his people, and answers them for their profit, though He doth not alwayes answer them according to their wills. As the Physitian hears the Patient's request, *Non ad voluntatem, sed ad sanitatem*; He respects not so much the Patient's will, as his health. The Patient calleth for drink, but the Physitian gives him a Sirup, or a Julip, which is better. We many times, like the Sons of *Zebedee*, ask we know not what: Instead of bread, we sometimes ask stones. God hears to our profit, and Answers, though not alwayes according to our wills,

wills. Upon this account, *Abrahams* request, on the behalf of *Ishmael*; and *Moses* request, to enter into the Land of *Canaan*, were denyed. Yet they were heard in another thing, and their requests granted in another way.

4. This is another thing, that men look upon as evil for them; Gods depriving them of many dear comforts: as when He takes away a Wife out of our bosoms, or breaks an Olive branch off from about our tables, &c. This is lookt upon by us, as evil, and yet it may be for good.

1. It may be to make us to live more to Him, and to lean more on Him; and to seek for that in Him, which we sought in the creature. God sometimes pulleth away our worldly stayes and props, to make us depend more on Him, in whom our strength and comfort lieth.

2. He sometimes takes away our comforts, to return them better, as he did *Jobs*. Gods pulling down, is sometimes for this end, to build up better. To make that of Marble, that before was but of Brick. He sometimes takes a comfort out of our hands, to deliver it again to us, with Interest and Advantage.

5. Some look upon this as Evil; Gods exercising them with many sad and sore Afflictions. And some of the Grounds that they go upon, are these:

1. That Afflictions are Arguments of Divine Wrath.

2. That they are Useless.

3. That

3. That they are Bitter, and Barthenfom to Nature.
4. That they are the Fruits of Sin.

We shall Examine these Grounds, on which many go, in making such a Judgment of an Afflicted Condition.

1. Say some, Afflictions are Arguments of Divine Wrath, and Divine Hatred; and therefore not good for man in this Life: since such, as upon whom Afflictions fall, are as it were marked out by God, as the Objects of His hatred.

Now let us a little examine this, and search whether it be so; and upon serious and strict Examination, we shall find, It is an Error, being contrary to Scripture-Truth, *Eccles. 9. 1.* They who say so, condemn the generation of the Just; we finding, that most precious Saints, whom God tendred as the Apple of his Eye, have seen and felt, great Afflictions. *Noah*, who found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord, yet saw a World drowned. *Job*, of whom God gives a most high Character, for his Piety and Uprightness, *was stript of all to a Shoelatchet.* *David*, a man after Gods own Heart, was bred up in the School of Affliction. Yea, *Jesus Christ* himself, who was the Beloved Son, yet was; *Vir Dolorum*, A man of Sorrows. You shall find, that to some, the Scripture makes Afflictions to be Arguments of Divine Love, *Prov. 3. 12.* *Whom the Lord loveth, he Correcteth, as a Father doth his Son, in whom he delighteth.* And *Jesus Christ* speaketh of them, as Arguments of Love, *Rev. 3. 19.* *As many as I love, I Rebuke and Chasten.* It is true, God delights not in Afflicting; but he loves His Chil-

Children; and that Love moves Him as a Father, to Correct and Afflict them for their Good. He were a cruel Father, that would suffer his Child to die for want of a little Physick. So that it is a grosse Mistake, to think that Afflictions are always the Wounds of an Enemy. But of this, more shall be spoken afterwards.

2. Some have this Conceit; That an Afflicted condition is an Useless condition; and therefore not good for a man in this Life. They look upon Afflictions as things that a man may be very well without.

We shall a little examine, whether this be true, or no. Many indeed say, concerning Afflictions, as those did concerning *Nazareth*, *Can any Good come out of Nazareth?* So, Can any good come out of Afflictions? We must know, That Afflictions are as necessary for us, as our Daily Bread. It is strange, yet it is true, *These Thorns will bear Grapes, and these Thistles will bear Figs:* And there is a Day, when the Saints of God shall say, They could not have been without such and such Afflictions; and that *It was good for them that they were Afflicted.* Some *Trees* there are, whose *Root* is *Bitter*, yet their *Fruit*, *Sweet*. A natural Eye seeth no *Good* in them, and tastes no *Sweetness*: And indeed, the Spiritual man, doth not always, at present, discern what Advantage cometh by them. We must know, those *Creatures* that we look upon as *Venemous*, and *Noxious*, are yet useful for some Ends; and some Respects: Thus, even *Toads*, &c. The skilful *Apothecary* knoweth how to make *Vipers* and *Scorpions*, Medicinal. Enquire of the Saints of God, and they will tell you, from their own Experience, What good Afflictions have done

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them;

them; and that they were *Chastened for their Profit*, Heb. 12. 10. Afflictions seem to be but dry Rods; yet, like *Aaron's Rod*, they have found them bringing forth both *Blossomes*, and *Fruit*.

3. Some say, Afflictions are bitter, and burthensom to Nature; and therefore conclude, they are not good for a man in this Life.

We shall a little examine this, to see whether there be *Truth* in it. The Premises are granted, That they are *Bitter* and *Grievous* to Flesh and Blood; and the Apostle grants it; Heb. 12. 11. But the Consequence is denied, That what is *Bitter* and *Grievous* to *Flesh* and *Blood*, is therefore *Evil* for a man in this Life. And therefore we are to distinguish, between what is *Toothsom*, and what is *Wholsom*: Between things, that are *Pleasingly*, and *Profitably* good. Things may be *Profitably* good for us, that are not *Pleasingly* good. Those things are sometimes most *Wholsom*, that are least *Toothsom*. There be sweet and honied *Poysons* that Destroy. And there be bitter, and distastful Medicines that do Cure. We know Wormwood is a Bitter hearb, and yet *Wholesom*, and *Useful* for Man. Some things may be sweet in the Mouth, that yet are bitter in the Stomack. Heb. 12. 11. The Apostle saith of Afflictions, though they are *Grievous*, yet they bring forth *the quiet fruit of Righteousness*. Here is the Difference between the Evils of Sin, and of Affliction.

The Evils of Sin, they are Sweet in the Mouth, but bitter afterwards; but the Evils of Affliction are bitter in the Mouth, but sweet in the Close. Afflictions, indeed are bitter, but oftentimes, the bitterness ariseth from our own Spirits.
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When our Taste is Vitiated, some things seem to be Bitter to us, that otherwise would not be so. It's our Spirits, that many times Imbitter our Condition, and make our Chain much Heavier, than other waies it would be. There are many Afflict themselves, when they are under an Affliction. As it is with a *Bird*, when it is gotten into a Room, or Chamber, it might do well, if it sat still, till the Doors and Casements were opened; but, till then, with flying against the Walls, it doth but hurt and bruise it self. To close up this: Physitians do observe, we are most apt to Surfeit of those things that are most Sweet and Luscious. And we find, *Solomon*, the Wisest of Men, prefers bitter things, before Sweet. *Eccles.* 7. 3. *Sorrow is better than Laughter.* Ver. 4. *It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting.*

4. Some say, That Afflictions are the Effects and Fruits of Sin; And therefore not Good for a man in this Life.

We shall a little Examine this Ground. It is true, That Afflictions, were, at first, Fruits of Sin. But we must make a Difference, between what they were at First, and what Jesus Christ hath made them, to His People now. It is true, they were at first, the products of Sin; but to the People of God they are now Changed and Altered. We must Distinguish between what is Sinfully Evil, and Penally Evil. What is Sinfully Evil, is Unchangeably Evil; but Afflictions are but Penally Evil, and may be made good. We must know, As there is a Regeneration of Persons, so of Things: To him that is Born again, All is Born again; As

his Outward Comforts are born again, so all his Outward Afflictions. It is true, the Evils of Afflictions were first Conceived in the womb of Sin, and Sin brought them Forth : but there is the womb of the Covenant, and of the Promise, where they are New-formed ; and out of which, those things that were Punishments, come forth Priviledges ; and what was Loss, comes forth Gain. We read, *Rom. 5. 12. Sin entred into the World, and Death by Sin.* We see Death came in by Sin. Death, which is *the King of Fears* ; and so its Attendants with it, *viz.* all Miseries and Afflictions whatsoever.

Thus, at first, they were conceived in, and came forth of, the womb of Sin : but the Covenant, and Promise, have changed and altered them ; it turneth Miseries into Mercies, and Punishments into Priviledges, and Evil into Good. *1 Cor. 3. 22. All is yours,* (saith the Apostle to Believers ;) and among other things, he names *Death* : where he makes Death one of the Believer's Priviledges, put into the Believer's Charter. And the same Apostle, *Phil. 1. 21. saith, To him to Die, was Gain.* Death, in respect of its first Birth, was Loss ; but being born again, it becomes Gain. And as Death, which is *the King of Fears*, (and so the chief of Evils ;) so likewise, all other Evils are Gain to a believer. *Rom. 8. 28. All things work together for Good, to them that love God.*

Thus we have examined the Grounds, that those go upon, in making this Judgment, of an Afflicted Condition ; *That it is Evil for a Man in this Life.*

I shall Conclude with these Queries :

1. Who knows, or can say, that, That is Evil for a man in this Life, that God inflicts upon the best in this Life. We often find the cup of Gall and Wormwood going round about the Saints Tables. We usually find it the Diet-drink, with which God doth *Physick* his *Dearest Children* : With the same Sword wherewith He destroyeth his Enemies, He sometimes wounds his Friends ; and all this for their Good. We find, the Godly ones of *Judah* were carried Captives to *Babylon*, as well as others : they lost their Houses, Estates ; were taken out of the Land of their Nativity, and carried into a strange Land : And yet the Lord saith of them, *Jer. 24. 5. That he had sent them into Captivity for their Good.*

2. Who knows, or can say, that, that is Evil for man in this Life, that may be consistent with Happinesse. An Afflicted Man may yet in this Life be a happy Man. As Man, at his best Estate, is but Vanity ; so there are, that in their worst Estate may be Happy. A Man may be Great, and Rich, and yet Miserable : And, a Man may be Poor, and Afflicted, and yet Happy. *Job 5. 17. Behold, Happy is the Man whom God Correcteth.* It seems to be a strange thing, and therefore a **BEHOLD** is put to it. A strange Sight, to see an Afflicted Man, and yet a Blessed Man ! Sense and Reason wonder at this Conjunction, That Affliction and Happinesse should both Kisse the same Person. *Psal. 94. 12. Blessed is the Man whom thou Chastnest, &c.* So that a Man may be a Chastised man, and yet a Blessed man.

3. Who knoweth, or can say, That those things

are evil for a man in this life, that, by experience, have been found, to have been the means of doing many good. Though Afflictions of themselves have not done it, yet, being Sanctified, and Instruction going together with them, they have wrought a Gracious and wonderful Change. How many may say with *David*, *That it was good for them, that they were Afflicted*. We read, of *Moses* his Rod, what Miracles it wrought. The Rod of Affliction works Miracles, when God worketh with it. How many Proud ones, hath Affliction Humbled? When *Mannasseh* was in Bryers, then he sought God. How many Ignorant ones, hath Affliction taught? They have Learnt that, in the School of Affliction, that they never knew before. Sir *Thomas Palmer*, upon *Tower-Hill*, when he came to Dye, (pointing to the *Tower*) said, I have learnt more, in yonder dark Corner of the *Tower*, then ever I learnt in all my Life. How many wild, and unruly Spirits, hath Affliction tamed? Those, that in their Prosperity, have been, as Wild Asses, used to the Wilderness, that none could turn them back: Yet in their Moneth of Affliction, they have been found and taken. *Jer. 31. 18.* *Ephraim* saith, *Thou hast Chastised me, and I was Chastised.* (i. e.) I was bettered by the Chastisement. He was, as an unruly Bullock, unaccustomed to the Yoak. But Afflictions have made him to submit, and tamed him. How many Wandring ones, hath Affliction Reduced and brought into the Way? *Psal. 119. 67.* *Before I was Afflicted, I went astray: but now I keep thy Statutes.* Many have been out of the Way to Heaven, and have been brought into it, by Gods Guiding with this Rod. It was Affliction, that
made

made the Prodigal find the way to his Father's house. We read of those that were with *Paul* in the Ship, when they suffered Ship-Wrack, *Acts* 27. 44. that some upon Planks, and some upon the broken pieces of the Ship, got safe to Land. So, many have been brought to Heaven, upon the broken pieces of an Estate; and must say, (as one, once said) *They had been undone, if they had not been undone.* How many worldlings, hath Afflictions Weaned from the world? By being crost in the creature, they have come to discern the Vanity that is in the creature, and to have their hearts taken off the creature. Here we tast Affliction, (as a Father saith) *Tanquam amaritudinem in ubere materno.* We are apt to hang on the breasts of the Creature, and Afflictions are the Worm-wood, by which God Weans us from them.

Lastly, How many Sinners, hath Affliction stopped, who else, had run headlong into Hell; if God had not made a Hedg of Affliction in their way? We read, *Hos. 2. 6. I will* (saith the Lord) *hedg up thy way with Thorns, and thou shalt not find thy paths.* God sometimes, maketh a hedg of Thorns, whereby sinners are stopped; It is happy for a man to meet with such a stop, though the hedg be made of Thorns.

4. Who knoweth, or can say, That, that Condition is Evil for a man in this life, in which the People of God are best. This is to be considered, that wicked men, are worst, in their best worldly condition; and a Godly Man, is best, when his outward condition, is worst. As one saith of the English Nation.

Anglica gens est optima flens & pessima ridens.

The English Nation, is best when it Weeps, and worst when it Laughs.

Thus for the Second sort, of those that are mistaken about Conditions.

3. There are another sort, that are grossly mistaken on the other hand; And such are those, who think it cannot but be well with them, because they are in this life Afflicted. Thus some think, they are the better, and the happier, upon that account. And here lyeth the mistake, because they hear, Afflictions have done some good; and that some, have been able to say, That it was good for them, that they were Afflicted; and thence Conclude, That they are happy, because their Condition, is such a Condition: Never considering, (what I said before,) That Afflictions of themselves, never did any man good; and that conditions are to us, as we are in those conditions. Some, because they Suffer in this world, think it is an Argument, that they shall be freed from Suffering in another world; as if God could not make two Hells for them. We must know, when the Scripture speaketh of Rejoycing in Affliction, it is not to be understood, that merely Afflictions are matter of Joy. Those that think, they are happy because they are Afflicted, and that their Condition is low in this world, may be sadly mistaken. It is said, *Mat. 5. 3. Blessed are the poor in Spirit, &c.* It is not said, Blessed are all that are poor in Purse.

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Let me tell you, Some mens sufferings here, are but the forerunners of those that are to come, and so may be but the beginning of sorowes. We must know, that upon the very Tooth-ach of a Reprobate, (as one saith) Hell is Engraven. Every *Lazarus*, is not taken into *Abrahams* bosome. Those may want a bit of bread here, that may hereafter, cry as *Dives* did, for a drop of water, to cool their tongues. A man may be poor in this world, and poor in the world to come. There are a sort of poor, that are the worst of people under Heaven, being Ignorant, Stubborn, Prophane, Viti-ous, Despisers of God, His Sabbaths, Ordinances, Ministers, People. And indeed, for the most part, the poorest sort, are the worst of people, and the most Licentious; there being nothing of know-ledge, or politique Restraints, or civil and inge-nious Education, to keep them in, and hold them back. To conclude this, Happiness is not the portion of every Afflicted man in this life. It is not Affliction, but Affliction Sanctified, that makes a man Happy by it.

Thus for the First Information.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Second Information.

IF no man knoweth, What is good for a man in this Life, then it Informeth us, That we should be as ready to receive evil, as well as good, at the Hands of God. We are not to be our own Carvers in respect of Conditions. When *Job* was in his sad Condition, the Devil stirred up his Wife, to tempt him to Blasphemy, and Impatience. But see what answer *Job* returns to her, *Job* 2. 10. *Thou speakest as one of the foolish Women, &c.* Where First, He Reprehends her. Secondly, He Instructeth Her. *Shall we*, saith he, *receive Good at the Hands of God, and not receive Evil; (q. d.)* Have I, for so many Years, received so many good things, and blessings, from the Hand of God; and shall I not now, receive these Crosses and Afflictions? Now, receiving Evil from the Hand of God, stands in this, In a Sweet, and Patient Submission, to the Will and Dispensation of God; being content, with what God sendeth, whether it be good or evil, and that upon these Considerations.

1. That God knoweth, what is better for us in this life, then we do; since no Man knoweth, what is good for man in this life.

2. That Good and Evil, come both, from one and the same God. It is the Lord that gives, and that takes away. As we have Blessings, by Divine Dona-

Donation, so Afflictions, by Divine Ordination. It is God, that bringeth not only Men, and their Comforts, but also Men, and their Crosses, together.

3. As Good and Evil, come from the same God, so they may come from the same Affection in God; They may both come from Love. The Apostle *James*, puts this Question, *Can a Fountain send forth sweet water and bitter?* Jam. 3. 11. Yet from the same Fountain of Divine Love, may issue the sweet Waters of Comfort, and the bitter Waters of Afflictions. The same Love, that moves a Father, to bestow an Inheritance on his Child, moves him also, to Correct his Child.

4. All Evils, come from a God, that hath a Sovereign Power over us, and may do with us, what he pleaseth. A God that may give, and take away; and who can say to Him, *What dost Thou?* A God that hath Right to all that we have, and so may take away what he please. In taking away, he takes away, but what is His own. It is observable in Scripture, That the Lord claimeth an Interest, in all that belongs to Man, (*viz.*) *The Earth, and the Fulness thereof*; and so, whatsoever it affordeth to man, Whether Fields, full of Corn; or Foulds, full of Sheep; or Orchards, full of Fruit; or Stables, full of Meat. The very Cattel, and the Beasts of the Earth, are the Lords, *Psal. 50. 10. All the Beasts of the Forrest are mine.* The Beasts of the Forrest, are of a wild nature, and commonly know no Master; and yet of these, The Lord saith, they are His: So also, He saith of Gold, and Silver, *Hag. 2. 8. Thy Gold and Silver, is mine. Yea, the Wool, and the Flax we have. Hos. 2. 8. He saith,*
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It is His. So that God, in taking away any thing from us, takes away but what is His own.

5. All Evils, come from the Hand of a Powerful God, with whom there is no Contending. When a great Philosopher was chekt, for yielding in a Discourse he had with *Adrian* the Emperour, he gave this Answer, Should I not yield to him, that hath Thirty Legions at command? There is no Contesting with Sovereignty, no Resisting Omnipotency, no Striving with our Maker. The Earthen Pitcher, by striking against a Rock, doth but dash it self to pieces.

6. All Evils, come from a Righteous God, that can do His creature no wrong, *Gen. 18. 25. Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?* *Rom. 3. 5. Is God Unrighteous,* (saith the Apostle) *that taketh Vengeance?* And he answereth it, with a *God forbid.* So we may say, Is God Unrighteous, that sendeth Affliction? *God forbid,* *Deut. 32. 4. All His wayes are Judgment.*

7. All Evils come from that God, that can bring Good out of Evil, and Light out of Darkness; that can turn Water into Wine, and make us Spiritual Gainers, by Temporal Afflictions. He sometimes pulls down, to build up better; and sometimes takes away, when He intends a greater Good.

Thus for the Use of Information.

We now come to the Resolution of this great Question, Whether the knowledg, of what is good for a man in this life, be so hidden from man, that it may not in some measure be attained to; And if so, What Directions are there, for the attaining of this Knowledg?

Answer.

Ans^w. Though the full and perfect Knowledge of *what is good for a man in this Life*, be so hidden, That a Man cannot make a Judgement of others conditions, yet we grant that he may make a judgement of his own Condition. And here I shall give in, some Directions to help Men, in making a Judgement of their own Condition.

1. General.
2. Particular.

I. General Directions.

1. Something is to be Known.
2. Something is to be Done,

I. Something is to be Known, before we can make a right Judgement of our Condition. So the things to be Known, are these:

1. Who is the Framer of our Conditions; Who it is Ordains and Appoints them, and puts us into them? It is not, as the Heathen thought, *Quisque fortuna suæ faber*, That every Man is the Framer of his own Fortune; and so of his own Condition. Conditions are Divine Allotments. *Misery (saith Job) springs not out of the Dust.* And the Psalmist tells us, *That Promotion comes neither from the East, nor from the West; but God is the Judge: i. e. He is the great Orderer, and Disposer of Conditions: He puteth down One, and setteth up Another.* It comes not from the East or West; It comes not from Earth, nor from Man; but it is God, that brings a Man, and his Condition together, and that Frames it for him.
And

And it is impossible, that ever any Man should make a true Judgement of his Condition, That doth not first Know, who is the Framers of it.

2. We must know the right way of making a Judgement of Conditions. Except we know that, it is impossible, but we must be Mistaken. And, I shall give you some Particulars concerning that:

1. In Judging of Conditions, Take heed of being over-Hasty. Hasty, and Rash Judgement, is seldom Right. We are to Weigh, and Consider well of a Condition, before we make a Judgement of it. A Condition, at the first Blush, may seem otherwayes then it is. The Good, and so the Evil, of a Condition, doth not appear presently; It may lie at the Bottom of it. The good of Affliction doth not appear presently: but the Apostle, saith, *Heb. 12. 11. It yeildeth the quiet fruit of Righteousnesse, τοῖς γυμνασούμενοις, to them that are exercised thereby.* So, that we must be Exercised in a Condition, before we can make a Judgement of a Condition. And the Apostle, in that Chapter, telleth us, That an Afflicted condition, at the first sight, seems *grievous*, and not *joyous*: but, afterwards (saith he) *it brings forth the quiet fruit of Righteousness.* This was the Error of Job's Friends; they were too hasty in making a Judgement of his Condition: and so, it is no wonder they were so Mistaken about it.

2. In making a Judgement of Conditions, you must not judge of the Person by the Condition, but of the Condition by the Per-

Person. Some there be, that judge of Persons, by the Condition; As the *Barbarians* did of *Paul*, when they saw a Viper hanging on his Hand; *Surely, this Man is a Murderer, &c.* Thus, some judge of Persons, to be Good, or Evil, according as their Conditions are. So, they judge those to be Good, whose condition is Prosperous; as those in *Malachi*, *Mal. 3. 15.* called *the proud Happy*. And, so they look upon those as Wicked, who are in an Afflicted condition. Thus, *Job's* Friends did judge of him, by his Condition. Now, the right way of making a Judgement of Conditions, is, To Judge of Conditions by Persons. To a Wicked man, every condition is Evil: And, to a Godly man, every condition is Good. That, as the Expression is, *Tit. 1. 15.* *To the Pure, all things are Pure*: So, to those that are Good, all things are Good. If he hath Prosperity, it causeth Thankfulness; if Adversity, it worketh Patience. *Rom. 8. 28.* *All things work together for Good, to them that Love God*. So that we must know, we are to judge of Conditions, by the Persons. When one came to *Austin*, and told him of one that came to a strange End, he presently asked, *But, how did he Live?* Intimating, That, a man was not to be judged of, by the manner of his Death, if he were Godly in his Life.

3. In making of a Judgement of Conditions, you must judge of them, by what Men are to, and in, their Conditions. I have

have told you before, A condition is to a Man, as he is to, and in, his condition. It is, as a Man mannageth his condition. Would you know, whether Prosperity be Good for a Man? You must see how he doth manage that condition; and how he doth carry, and deport himself in it. If he demean himself Proudly, and make the Things he enjoyes, to be Fuel for his Lust; you may conclude, his condition is Evil for him. So, on the contrary; Would you know, Whether an Afflicted condition be Evil for a Man? Mark how he Behaves himself in that condition; If Foolishly, if Impatiently; Either on the one hand, Despising the Affliction; Or, on the other hand, Murmuring at it: You may know, that it is Evil for him. Of this, I shall speak more afterwards.

4. To make a Judgement of Conditions, We must Know our Spirits, and Dispositions. Now, we cannot know the Spirits, and Dispositions of others; but we should labour to know our own, which we may know; and thereby come to know *what is good for us in this Life*. Some there are, That will undertake to make a Judgement of a condition, without ever eying, or considering their own Disposition. It is with some Men, as it is with some that sit at the Wine: when they have drunk so many Cups, yet they call for the other Quart, and the other Pint, when they have Drunk too much already; not considering what their
Heads

heads will bear. Consider, as all heads, so all dispositions are not alike. This *Agur* acknowledged in that prayer of his, *Prov.* 30. 8. *Give me not Riches.* He looked upon them, as a heady and intoxicating Drink, which was too Strong for him. The Prophet speaks of some, that are strong to drink Wine. Now a man of a weak Brain, that will make their measure his, is easily overtaken. We are apt to eye the prosperous condition of another, and to think such a condition is good for us; and to desire, to have our condition made after that Fashion and Mode. But this is, as if the younger child should cry, to have the coat of his elder brother, which would be too long for him, and ready continually to make him fall.

5. In making a Judgment of a condition, we must judg of it, by the relation it hath to another condition, viz. that which is Spiritual and Eternal. The saying is, that what is the first, and best, in every thing, is the Rule of the rest: So the best condition, must direct us, how to judg of lower conditions. That condition is good for a man, that makes his Spiritual Condition the better: This is the fault of many, they judg of conditions, without considering how they stand in conjunction with, or opposition to, their Spiritual and Eternal Condition. We may safely conclude, that that Condition is good for a man in this Life, that is an advantage to him, in relation

lation to another Life. Many, little consider this. We should put the question to our selves, in every condition, Am I the better for being in this Condition, in relation to the Spiritual and Eternal Good of my Soul? Doth it hinder, or further my growth in Grace? Doth it hinder, or further my Salvation? Doth it set me, nearer Heaven, or nearer Hell?

6. In making a Judgment of Conditions, we must make use of Faith, and not Judgment, by Sense and Opinion, not by Appearances; Those that Judge so, will never make a Right Judgment of Conditions. 'An Eye of Faith will see Good, in that wherein an Eye of Sense, yea of Reason too, can see none, Heb. 11. 26. It is said, By Faith, Moses refused to be called the Son of Pharaohs Daughter, &c. Where see, what he refused (*viz.*) to be called, the Son of Pharaohs Daughter; which seemingly, was the greatest Honour and Advancement, that a man could attain unto; And then see what he chose, (*viz.*) to Suffer Affliction with the People of God. One would have thought, he had chose the Evil, and refused the Good. But by an Eye of Faith, he saw Evil in that, that Sense and Reason would have told him was good; and Good in that, that they would have told him was Evil. It is observable, in Mat. 5. that all the Beatitudes are affixed, to unlikely conditions: *Blessed are the poor in Spirit. Blessed are those that are Persecuted for Righteousness's sake.*
Blessed

Blessed are ye, when men Revile, and Persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you, falsely for my Names sake. This is to shew, that the Judgment of the Word, and the Judgment of the world, are contrary. Faith will shew you, that the men of the world, are *infalicyter felices* miserable in being happy. And the Children of God, are *felicyter infalices*, happy in their being miserable. So that, as the Apostle saith, *Without Faith, it is impossible to please God*: So, without Faith, it is impossible to make a judgment of conditions. I shall close this, with an Answer, given to one, that passed his censure upon a picture, as ill drawn, when it was not so; *Si meos oculos haberes, non ita diceret*, If thou hadst mine eyes, thou wouldst not say so. Faith teacheth a man, to make another Judgment of Conditions, then Sense or Reason doth.

III. Those that will make a judgment of a condition, must know another thing, (*viz.*) What it is makes a condition good, and what makes a condition evil for a man in this life. I shall in some particulars shew, What it is, that makes a mans condition good for him in this life.

1. An Interest in the Covenant. Where there is that Interest, there is an assurance that all is good, and all is for good. When we once come to know our Interest in the Covenant, we may then make a judgment of a condition. I shewed you before; we are not to judg of persons, by their conditions, but of conditions, by the persons, *Psal. 25. 10. All the wayes of the Lord, are Mercy and*

Truth, to them that keep his Covenant. So it is to them that have an Interest in the Covenant. All conditions fall under a Promise, when the Scripture saith, *All shall work together for good.* An Afflicted condition it self, falleth under that promise. So when it is said, *No good thing, will He withhold from them, that walk uprightly.* Afflictions themselves, come under that promise. If Afflictions be good for them, • they shall have them; and if they have them, they may be assured they are good for them. It is the Covenant, and Promise, that helpeth us, to make a right Interpretation of all conditions, and of all the Dealings of God with us in this life.

2. That which makes a condition good for a man in this life, is the Enjoyment of God in a Condition; and so we may conclude, that that condition is good for a man in this life, in which he enjoys God. The best condition, without God in it, is evil; and the worst condition, in which we enjoy God, is good. God is the chiefest Good, and that condition must needs be good, in which we enjoy the chiefest Good. Look upon the worst of outward conditions, it is the best, if there be an enjoyment of God the more in it. This was the ground of *Moses* choice, *Heb. 11. 26.* that he choose rather, the suffering of Affliction with the People of God, then the enjoyment of all the *Pleasures and Treasures of Egypt.* He saw, God was to be Enjoyed in that Condition. So that by this, we may make a judgment of conditions: That condition is good for a man in this life, in which he enjoys the chiefest Good. The Apostle saith, *2 Cor. 1. 5. As our Tribulations abound for Christ, so*
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our Consolations abound through Christ. When one seeth Christians abound in Tribulations, he would think their condition evil; but when he cometh to see their Consolations abound in that condition, he must needs conclude it good. To close up this, There is no condition good, without the enjoyment of the Chiefest Good. He that enjoys God in a condition, enjoys Him, whose Favour is Life, and whose Countenance is a Sun, to enlighten the darkest condition. It is the Sun, that makes day, let the Starrs be never so many, and shine never so bright, yet it is night still. So it is in respect of conditions, let a man enjoy never so much of the creature, yet without the enjoyment of God, it is but a dark condition. It is His Countenance, that makes the darkness of a condition, to be light about us, *Psal. 18. 28. He shall make my darkness, to be light.* *Mic. 7. 7. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light about me.* So that that condition is good for a man in this life, that God enlightneth, and shineth upon, with the beams of His Countenance.

3. That that speaks a mans condition Good for him in this Life, is, The suitableness of his Spirit to his condition. When the Spirit is not above the condition. As it is to be observed in a Married condition; the sweetness of the condition lieth in this, In the Suitableness of their Spirits. So, in every condition, the sweetness, and goodness of it, lieth in the Suitableness that is between our Spirits, and our Condition. We see how it is with some, That their spirits are above their condition; their spirits are High, when their condition is Low; and upon this, their condition doth not please

please them. And this is the cause of much Discontent, because their spirits suit not with their condition. This is the great thing we are to look to; In making a judgement of conditions, to search, and find out, How our spirits suit with our condition. Whether we can say, as the Apostle doth, *Phil. 4. 11. I have learnt, in every estate to be Content.* He had a spirit fitted for every condition. So then, when your spirits and conditions suit, it is one thing, by which you are to make a judgement of your condition.

4. That which makes a condition Good for a man in this Life, is, *Peace within.* What ever the condition be Without, if there be peace Within, it makes it good and sweet to him. Want of that imbitters a condition. *Solomon saith, A good Conscience is a continual Feast.* It Feasts a man, and makes him Merry in all conditions; and so makes the worst Outward estate and condition to be good and sweet to him. *Isa. 48. 22. There is no peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* Put him into what condition you will, he hath no Peace in that condition; and that spoils all.

5. That, that makes a condition good for a man in this Life, is, Doing the Work of his condition. Conditions have their several, and suitable Improvements. In every condition, a man should put such a Question to himself, as the Prophet puts, *Mich. 6. 8. And now, What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?* So, in every condition we should put this Question to our selves; What is it that the Lord requires me to do, as the work of my condition? The Apostle *James* tells us of Duties suitable to conditions, *Jam. 5. 13. If any man be Afflicted, let*

let him Pray; If any man be Merry, let him sing Psalmes. An Afflicted condition hath its Duties, and a Prosperous condition hath it's: And by doing the Work, and performing the Duties of a condition, we make a Judgement of it, Whether it be good for us in this Life.

6. That, that makes a condition good for a man in this Life, is, His living above his outward condition. When, though there be a suitableness of spirit to the condition, yet he takes not up with his condition, but fetcheth in his Contentment from some higher thing. What is it, that makes a Prosperous condition Evil to some? Surely this, they look no further than their condition; They look no higher than Riches and Honour, &c. and seek for all their comfort, and contentment from them. And likewise, What is it that makes an Afflicted condition Evil to some? Surely this, they have their Eye only upon their Condition; they look no higher than their Troubles, and Crosses, and Afflictions. They see nothing beyond their condition; as *Hagar*, when she was wandering in the Wilderness, and the Water in her Bottle was spent, she concludes, that She, and her Child, must Die: as though the Bottle was all that she, and her Child, had to live upon; when yet, there was a Fountain near, but she could not see it. Let a mans condition be what it will, yet it cannot hurt him, if he live Above it. Prosperity cannot hurt that man, who maketh God his All, in a condition. There is an Expression, *Job 20. 22.* concerning a Wicked man; *That in the midst of his Sufficiency he shall be in Straits.* Thus it is with some men, Let their condition be what it will, yet

in the midst of it they are in Straits : the Reason is, Because they live no Higher than their condition. In the midst of their Prosperity, and Sufficiency, they are in straits, by reason of their many Cares, and Fears, and perplexing Thoughts, and unsatisfied Desires ; and if so in Prosperity, much more in Adversity. Now, a man that lives upon that, that is Higher than his Condition, hath such sweet In-comes of Joy, and Peace, and Comfort, and Contentment in every Condition, that he is never in any Straits. Hence it is, the Apostle telleth us, *1 Tim. 6. 6. Godliness, with Contentment, is great Gain :* Or, it may be read thus, *Godliness is great Gain, with Contentment ;* i.e. It bringeth Gain with Contentment. Now, what is Godliness ? It is an Heavenly impression, and propension in the heart and soul of a Man, whereby it is, in all conditions, carried towards God. Now, what ever a mans condition be, Godliness will make it Gainful, and that with Contentment. Our Saviour told his Disciples, when they urged Him to Eate, *John 4. I have meat to eate, that ye know not of.* So it is with such a man, that lives upon God, and Christ, he hath, in every condition, that comfort, & contentment, that the World knows not of. Thus the Apostle Paul lived above his condition, *2 Cor. 6. 10. As Sorrowful, yet always Rejoycing, As having Nothing, yet possessing All things.* q. d. Men look upon us, as thole that are in a sad condition, being Poor, and having Nothing ; but we live upon something that is above our condition. So that every condition is good to him, that hath something to live upon above his condition. That, as it is in respect of Ordinances, so it is in respect of Conditions.

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We are, in the Use of Ordinances, to live above them, and to seek to find God in them: So in conditions, we are to live above them, and to seek to God, for that comfort and contentment that sweeteneth a condition. Before I leave this, I must tell you, there is a two-fold living above ones condition.

1. *Sinful*: Arising from Haughtiness of Spirit.

2. *Holy*: Proceeding from Heavenliness of Spirit.

1. *Sinful*: When a mans Heart, and Spirit, is not contented with its present Condition; when his spirit is above his condition, and he thinks his condition too low, and mean for him. This is Sinful.

2. *Holy*: When a man hath such a Heavenly Spirit, that causeth him, not to take up with the things of his Outward condition; but lives upon Higher things. And this stands in Two things.

1. Living above the Comforts of a Condition.

2. Above the Crosses of a Condition.

1. Living above the Comforts of a Condition.
It is thus with a gracious heart: when the outward condition is comfortable, yet he liveth upon something above the comforts of his condition. It is the Apostles Counsel, 1 Cor. 7. 29. &c. *Let those that have Wives, be as though they had none, and those that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not.* He liveth upon higher things, than the comforts of a Wife; So that it is, as if he should have said; The comfort in a Wife, was nothing, in respect of the comfort he finds in God, and Christ. And so he seeth, that in his condition, there is nothing to rejoyce in, in comparison of higher things. As Christ said to
his

his Disciples, *Rejoyce not in this, That the Devils are subject to you; But rather rejoyce in this, That your Names are written in Heaven.*

2. Living above the Crosses of a Condition: The Apostle saith, *1 Cor. 1. 29. Let them that weep, be as though they wept not.* To shew, that Christians, should live above the Crosses of their Condition, enjoying that that makes them weep, as if they wept not.

7. That, that makes a condition Good for a man in this Life, is, Watchfulness against the Temptations that attend a Condition. There must be standing upon our guard in Conditions, and watching against Temptations. Conditions (as I have shewed you formerly) are attended with Temptations. There are Temptations, that attend a Prosperous, and an Afflicted condition. Sathan layeth snares for us in every Condition; but cannot hurt us, if we but once know his Devices. He is subtle, and loves to Fish in all Waters; and so he layeth Snares in all conditions. This then speaks a condition Good, when we Watch against the Temptations of a Condition. The Apostle writing to *Timothy*, a young man, *2 Tim. 2. 22.* biddeth him *flee the lusts of Youth.* Youth hath its Lusts, and Conditions have their Temptations, which we ought to Watch against. A Prosperous condition hath its Temptations, and an Afflicted condition hath its Temptations. The Apostle, *1 Tim. 6. 17.* bids him, *Charge them that are Rich in this World, that they be not High-minded; and that they trust not in uncertain Riches:* Which shews the Temptations that attend that Condition, *viz.* High-mindedness, and trusting in Riches.

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An Afflicted condition hath its Temptations too, *Heb. 12. 5.* Where, writing to them that were in an Afflicted condition, he exhorteth them to avoid two Extreames, in *ver. 5.* *My Son, Despise not the Chastning of the Lord; neither faint, when thou art Rebuked of him.* In an Afflicted condition, we are apt, either to Despise the Affliction, or to be too much dejected and cast down under the Affliction: And therefore, *ver. 12.* he bids them *lift up the hands that hang down.* So *James 5.* he speaks to Afflicted ones to be Patient, and stablish their Hearts. And *ver. 9.* saith, *Grudge not one against another, Brethren.* The word is *μη σεμίζετε*, *Groan not one against another.* In it, there is an Exhortation to them, to watch against the Temptations that attend an Afflicted condition. Some think, the Apostle there forbids Murmuring Groans, which arise from our being discontented at Providences: This is one Temptation. Some think, they are Vindictive Groans, proceeding from Revenge, and Stomack against those that were the Instruments of our Affliction: This is another Temptation. Some think, are meant Envious Groans, proceeding from their Envy at those, that suffered lesse than they did: This is another Temptation. Thus we see, That all Conditions have their Temptations. And this is that, that speaks a condition Good for a man; when, in his Condition, he is watchful against the Temptations of it; avoiding the Snares of it. Satan observeth wind and tide in his Temptations; he observeth the wind and tide of a Condition. He observeth, whether the wind that bloweth, be a warm Southerly wind of Prosperity, or a cold Northerly wind

Wind of Adversity; and accordingly he suits his Temptations. It is the Condition that makes the Temptation in season. He seldom tempts a poor man to pride: And therefore it is made, by *Solomon*, a prodigious fight, *Eccles. 10. 7.* to see *Servants on Horse-back*. So he seldom tempts Rich men to Steal; the reason, is, Because such Temptations are unsuitable to their Condition.

CHAP. IX.

8. **T**Hat that makes a condition Good for a man in this Life, is, Spiritualizing a Condition; when there is an extracting something that is Spiritually good out of our outward, and temporal Conditions. Alchymists tell us, There is an Art, of turning baser Mettals into Gold: So there is a Heavenly Art, of Spiritualizing temporal Conditions, and turning them into Heavenly Advantages. The Gracious man is the true Alchymist, that can extract something that is Spiritual, out of that which is Temporal; and what concerns another Life, out of the things of this Life. We must know, there is an Art of Byassing conditions. A Bowl runneth according as you set the Byass; so conditions are according to the Byass you put upon them. When a condition is Spiritually Byassed, it moves a man Heaven-ward: Consider how it is with Saylers; though they have a Side-wind, yea, a Wind that seems to blow against them; yet they have an Art of setting their

their Sails so, that they will make an advantage of those Winds. So Grace, will teach every Man, so to manage his Condition, that, let the Wind of it blow from what place, or quarter it will, yet it shall be Advantageous to him, for the carrying him on, towards his desired Haven, which is Heaven. We must know; Outward conditions are common to Good and Bad. But here lieth the difference; The Godly man, from a Heavenly Principle, makes a Spiritual Advantage of his condition, when another doth not. Some, when they are in Prosperity, or Adversity, (being Carnal) understand not the Art of making a Spiritual Advantage of a Condition.

We know, there are some actions that are common to Men, and Beasts; As to Eat, Drink, and Move, &c. The Beast doth it, and Man doth it. Now where is the difference? In this, when Man doth them, they are Reasonable Actions, they are guided with Reason, and moderated by Reason; but when a beast doth them, they are the actions of a beast, and so they are but brutish. So it is in respect of conditions, they are common to good, and bad; but here lyeth the difference. A Godly man, being indued with a Principle of Spiritual Wisdom, makes a Spiritual Advantage of his condition, be it what it will; when the other, having no such principle, knoweth not how to do it. It is with Godly Men, in their worldly conditions, as it is with the Planets, which have a motion of their own, contrary to that Rapt Motion of the Heavens, whereby they are carried, and whirled about, in twenty four hours. So it is with Godly men, in their conditions, they are carried about

as the world is, in respect of conditions. In respect of their outwards, they are in the same condition with others, sometimes Rich, sometimes Poor, sometimes High, sometimes Low, sometimes in Prosperity, and sometimes in Adversity: But in these conditions, they have a different motion from others; being directed by Grace, and the Spirit of God, they move Heaven-wards. Even in those conditions, that seem to carry them downwards, they have a motion upwards. We know in Scripture, Prosperity is called a Mountain; and Afflictions are compared to, and called Waters. As for Prosperity, which is called a Mountain, Grace teacheth a man, to get on the top of it, from whence he may see Heaven the better, as Moses did the Land of *Canaan*, from the top of Mount *Pisgah*. Some there are, when their Mountain is made high, they set it between them and Heaven. And alas! what can a man see, when he is at the bottom, and foot of a Mountain? When a man, is on the top of a Mountain, then the Face of the Heavens, lyeth open to his View. Then a man may conclude, A prosperous condition is good for him, when it is not a Mountain, to hide Heaven from him, but to raise him up, more towards Heaven. So for an Afflicted Condition: Afflictions, are in Scripture, compared to Waters. Thus it is with some, when they come into these waters, they sink, and are over-whelmed. These waters run over them, and drown them. But with a Godly Man, it is otherwise; he swims upon these waters, and is like *Noah's* Ark in the Deluge, the higher the waters were, the more it was lifted up, towards Heaven: So the rising of these waters of Affliction,

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do but lift a Godly man up, nearer to Heaven. So then, if a man would make a judgment of conditions, he must see, whether they are Spiritually good for him, by what Spiritual Extraction he maketh out of them, and what Spiritual Advantage he makes of them.

9. That that makes a condition good for a man in this life, is, An holy indifferency of Spirit, in respect of conditions. When it is indifferent to him, what condition he is put into, submitting to the Will of God; and resolving, Gods Will, shall be his. Then is a condition good for a man, when his Spirit is brought to this indifferency. In respect of Salvation, he is Absolute; but in respect of outward conditions, whether to be high or low, he is indifferent, and saith, *Let it be as the Lord will*. When there is this submission to God in a condition, then it is good. Some there are, that have indeed, an indifferency of Spirit, in relation to Spiritual, and Eternal Good Things; but none, in relation to those good things that are Temporal. They are indifferent, whether they have Grace, or not, &c. But concerning the things of this life, it is with them, as with *Rachel* concerning children, They must have them, or else they dye. Then it is right, when there is an indifferency of Spirit, in respect of outward things. When our hearts are not set, on this or that, worldly thing; but we are indifferent, whether we have it or not. If God will give them the things of this life, such Spirits will be thankful; if God deny them, to them, such Spirits will be content. Such a Spirit had the Apostle, *Phil. 4. 11, 12. Not that I speak* (saith he) *in respect of want, for I know both*
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how to be abased, and how to abound, &c. And telleth us withal, that he had learned, in every condition, therewith to be content. (q. d.) As for these outward things, it is indifferent to me, whether I have them, or have them not; I will not be my own Carver, but am content, with whatsoever condition God shall put me into. A Gracious Spirit, is indifferent about all things, save-only those, that concern the good of his Soul. As that Martyr, Mr. *Bradford*, answered, when one asked him at parting, What he would have to the Queen; No more but this, said he, Tell Her Majesty, If she will give me my Life, I will thank Her; if she condemn me to Perpetual Imprisonment, I will thank her; If she will Banish me, I will thank Her, If she will Burn me, I will thank Her. Herein the indifferency of his Spirit appeared; that, let the Queen deal with him, how She pleased, it would please him, and he should therewith be content. Thus it is with a Gracious Spirit; It is content to be in what condition God seeth best for him. And this indifferency ariseth from the Consideration of these things:

1. From the consideration of Outward conditions, and the Things of them, that they can neither make a Man truly Happy, nor truly Miserable. Riches, and Honour, and such things, cannot make a man truly Happy. A man may be Rich, and yet a Reprobate. Happiness lieth in higher Things, and higher Enjoyments. And so likewise, Troubles, and Crosses, and Afflictions, cannot make a man truly Miserable. It is Sin, not Suffering, that doth it. This *Chrysostom* knew; by returning that Answer to the Empress, who Threat-

Threatned what She would do to him; Tell Her, (said he) *Nil nisi peccatum timeo*, I fear nothing but sin.

2. From the consideration of this, That he is not at his own disposing, but at God's, who may do with him, what he will, and put him into what Condition He pleaseth. He knoweth, he is not to be the Framers of his own Condition, and therefore, leaves it to the Great God, to choose and Frame his Condition for him.

3. From the consideration of this, The changeableness of Conditions; He considers this, If I should have Prosperity, it may quickly turn to Adversity, God having set the one, over against the other. And the consideration of this changeableness, is one thing that helpeth, to put the Spirit upon this indifferency.

4. From the consideration of this, That he knows not what condition is good for him in this life, and thence concludeth, that that condition must needs be best for him, that God seeth best.

5. From the consideration of this, What relation he hath to the world, that he is but a Pilgrim, and Stranger here, only Travelling through it, towards his Home. And so looketh upon conditions here, only as his Inn, in which he is to Lodg. From this consideration, ariseth this indifferency of Spirit. He is indifferent concerning his Inn, when he considereth, It is not his Home; if he be well accommodated, it pleaseth him, if not, yet he is contented, considering this, I am not to dwell here. Conditions to Gracious Spirits, are as weather is to Travellers, whether it be Fair or Foul, being on his Journey home-wards, he is content.

10. That that makes a condition good for a man in this life, is, A mans behaviour in his condition. Then it is right, when nothing from God, displeaseth us; and nothing from us, displeaseth God. When we are contented, with all the Lords dealings with us; and make it our care in a condition, that our carriage may be such, that it may not displease him. Some there are, that if God put them into a prosperous condition, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them, it pleaseth them well. But then, in that condition, it is not their care to please God; they abuse their Prosperity, to Pride, and Luxury, Gluttony, and Drunkenness. As it is said of *Jesurun*, Deut. 32. *He waxed fat, and kicked.* Some there are, that if God put them into an Afflicted condition, are not pleased with what God doth, neither do they please Him, in what they do, in that condition. As those Dispensations of God, are displeasing to them; so their behaviour, in that condition, is such, that it is most displeasing to God. How many do Fret, and Murmur, and break forth into the indecencies of passion, against God? As that Wicked King of *Israel* said, *This Evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* So consider, Then a condition is good for a man;

1. When nothing that comes from God, displeaseth him, let him put him in what condition he will. Let God set him up, or cast him down; let Him feed him, with pleasant bread, or with the bread and water of Affliction; Let Him set him upon the Throne, or on the Dung-hill; Let Him be a giving God, or a God taking away: Yet he is not displeased with Gods dealings with him. You may remember, what *Eli* said, when the sad
News

News was brought him, concerning what God would do by him and his house; his Answer was, *1 Sam. 3. 18. It is the Lord, let him do what he will.* Thus did *Hezekiah*, *Isa. 39. 8.* Thus did *Job*, when he received the sad News, concerning the losse of his Children and Goods, said he, *The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

2. When we displease not God in a condition. When we are so careful of our behaviour, that we say, as *David* did, *Psal. 39. 1. I said, I will take heed to my wayes, &c.* He therè, takes up a full resolution, of not giving liberty to his Tongue, to utter an impatient Word, or Syllable. So then, if we would know, whether the condition we are in, be good for us in this Life; we must enquire concerning these two things.

1. Whether God's dealings with us, please us; and our carriage, in our condition, please Him? The Truth is this; Most of us, desire that God would please us in our conditions; and give us, what we desire. As *Sampson* said of the Woman of *Timnah*, *Give her me, for she pleaseth me well.* So say some, Give me this, and that, put me into such a condition, for it pleaseth me well. But here is the Sin, They have no care to please God, in their condition. It is with them, as with the people of *Israel*, who asked meat, for their lusts. And as those, of whom the Apostle *James* speaketh, *They ask, that they may spend it upon their lusts.* So that, a condition is then good for us; when nothing from God,

displeaseth us, and nothing from us, displeaseth God in the condition.

II. That that makes a condition good for a man in this life, is, a mans enjoyment of himself in his condition. An holy and comfortable enjoyment of a mans self, in a condition, speaketh his condition good for him. The enjoyment of God, and the enjoyment of our selves, in a condition, makes a condition good for us.

1. Concerning a prosperous condition, How many have lost themselves in that condition; that, as we say of those, whom Wine, or Strong Drink hath overcome, that they are not themselves. Some, are so overcome with their prosperity, that we may say of them, they are not themselves. In the midst of their enjoyments, they enjoy not themselves: They possess not, but are possessed. The world doth possess them. They are, at best, but Servants, and Slaves to the world. The world enjoyes them, but they do not enjoy themselves. *Solomon telleth us, Eccles. 6. 2. of a man, to whom God hath given Riches, but not power, to eat thereof.* Such a man, is a very Slave to what he hath, and cannot find in his heart, to serve himself with it. They suffer the world to eat out their very hearts, with Cares, and Troubles, and Thoughtfulness, so that they enjoy not themselves. Know this, that a quiet, and a comfortable enjoyment, of a mans self in a condition, is a good, and a sweet thing.

2. Concerning an Afflicted condition. How many are there, that do not enjoy, but lose themselves in that condition? There are many, when they

they are losers in the world, do lose themselves to both, by their Impatience, Murmuring, and Fretfulness. Our Saviour saith, *Luk. 21. 19. In your patience, possess ye your Souls, (i. e.) possess ye your Selves.* It telleth us, that an impatient man, doth not possess, nor enjoy himself. It is with an impatient man, as it is with some children, when you anger them, by taking away what they have in one hand, they throw away, what they have in the other hand too. Thus Satan tempts some, to throw away themselves, when they find, that other things are taken away; and so they lose themselves in a condition. Let me tell you, that condition, in which a man enjoyes Himself, is good; in which he enjoyes his Reason, and regulates his Affections, and Passions by it. As *Solomon* said, *That in the midst of his Aberrations, his Wisdom remained with him.* (i. e.) he had his Judgment, and Understanding about him. We should bring our Affections, and Passions, to the Examination of Judgment, and Reason. If he rejoyce, it teacheth him, to put this question to himself, What reason have I for it? And if he grieve, What reason have I for it? Is the thing worth my joy? and worth my sorrow? So, to close up this, enjoyment of a mans self, consists in this, in a sweet tranquillity of Spirit, and temper of Soul; which neither Prosperity, nor Adversity can alter. It is an equal Minde, in unequal Conditions..

12. This makes a condition good for us in this life, Our Adorning our Condition. There are many, that are a shame to their conditions, doing that, which is unbeseeming their condition. No man need to be ashamed of his condition, if he

be not a shame, to his condition. The Apostle speaketh of Adorning our Generation, *Phil. 2. 15. Among whom ye Shine as Lights, in the midst of a crooked Generation.* So should a man adorn his condition; Though it be Dark, yet he should Shine in it.

Quest. Wherein stands the Adorning of a man's Condition?

Ans. In the Exercising and Acting the Graces of a Condition. The Stars in the Firmament, are an Ornament to it. So the Firmament of our Conditions, hath its Graces to Adorn it; the shining forth of which, is the Adorning of the condition. There are prosperity-Graces, and adversity-Graces, and the acting of these Graces, is the adorning of the condition. A prosperous condition hath its graces, by the acting and exercising of which, a gracious Heart doth Adorn it. So an Afflicted condition, hath its Graces, which adorn it. It is sad to see, how many are a shame, to their conditions; there being no appearance of grace, shining forth, suitable to their condition. We must know, as all Relations, and Conditions, have their Duties, so their Graces. Magistracy hath it's: They must be men, fearing God, Ruling in the fear of God, hating Covetousness. Ministry hath it's Graces, As the Apostle sheweth at large, in his Epistle to *Timothy*: Which Graces, are for the Adorning of their Professions. So conditions have their Graces too, by which they are Adorned. A thankful Spirit, and a publique Spirit, and a bountiful, and enlarged heart, adorn a Prosperous Condition. As on the contrary, a patient, and meek, and humble Spirit, submitting wholly, to the Will of God, adorns an Afflicted Condition. As a man by Unthankfulness, and Self-seeking, &c. shames a Prof-

Prosperous Condition: So some, by their Impatience, and Fretting, and Murmuring, &c. shame
n Afflicted Condition: Of whom, we may say,
 They shame their conditions, and their conditions
 are a shame of them. How many are there, that
 have made their condition to be evil spoken of, by
 being a shame to their condition.

Thus I have finished the first sort of General
 Directions, concerning what is to be known
 of those, that will make a right Judgment
 of Conditions.

2. I now come to give you in, General Directions, concerning what is to be done, by those that will make a right Judgment of conditions.

1. He that will make a right judgment of his condition, must be much in inquiring of the Lord by prayer, what his minde, and meaning is in a condition. As prayer is the means, by which we come to know the mind and meaning of God, in his Word, so also in his Works, and so in those conditions he puts us into. We read of *Jeremiahs* inquiry, concerning the prosperous condition of the wicked, *Jer. 12.1. Why doth the way of the wicked prosper?* We are indeed, to take heed, of putting absolute Interrogatories to God; as if he were bound, to give an account of His Providences to us. Yet we may lawfully go to Him, in a humble way, to see what is His Minde, and Meaning in a Dispensation, and in a Condition. It is our Duty, to get as near God as we can, to know this. This is one thing, *Job*, in his Afflicted condition, did desire of God, *Job. 10. 2. Shew me, wherefore thou contendest with me.* (i.e.) what this Affliction meaneth? whether it proceed from love, or hatred?

tred? whether it intend good, or evil? Are you
 in a prosperous condition, and would you make a
 judgment of it, whether it be good for you? Or in
 an Afflicted condition? The way to make a judg-
 ment of your condition, is, to be much in seeking
 to God by prayer, to know His minde, and mean-
 ing in a condition. Although the Apostle speaketh
 of prayer, as a Duty, most suitable to an Afflicted
 condition, *Jam. 5. 13. If any among you be afflicted,
 let him pray.* Yet let me tell you, Prayer is a duty,
 that suits with every condition. As we are to en-
 quire into the meaning of God, concerning Af-
 flictions, so concerning a Prosperous condition:
 if he putteth us into it, we are to begg of Him, the
 interpretation of the condition. Many there be,
 that never say, as *Rebecca* did, *Why am I thus?* In
 these enquiries concerning conditions, we must
 know, we are not so much, to enquire after the
 reasons of Gods dealing so with us, as of our
 duty, what we are to do in that condition. So
 then, prayer is a means, by which we must come
 to make a judgment of our condition. We should
 get as near God as we can, to hear what He speaks
 concerning our condition. As it is the Psalmist's
 expression, *Psal. 85. 8. I will hark, what the Lord
 will speak.* So we should harken, What the Lord
 will speak, concerning our condition. There is
 no man, can give a right judgment of an earthly
 condition, till he hear something from Heaven, con-
 cerning it. There was of old, this custom among
 the *Romans*, That it was not lawful, to propose any
 matter of moment in the Senate, *priusquam de Celo
 observatum erat*, before their Wizzards had made
 their Observations from the Sky, and Heavens.
 What

What they did Impiously, and Superstitiously, we ought to do Piously, in respect of conditions (*viz.*) Not to make a judgment of them, till we have heard from Heaven, concerning them. It is not by the observation of the houses of the Planets, or their Aspects, or their Oppositions, or Conjunctions; such an observation is forbid by a voice from Heaven. But we are to hearken, what the Lord speaketh to us, concerning our conditions; and Prayer is the means, by which (though we are on earth) we have an answer from Heaven. The *Jews* had two means, by which they received Answers from God. First, by the Mouth of the Prophets, when the Spirit came upon them. Secondly, by the Priests, when they put on the Brest-plate of Judgment. Those wayes of Understanding the Minde of God, are ceased. We have the Word to go to, and Prayer, to make use of, *Jam. 1. 5.* *If any man lack Wisdom, let him ask of God.* The Apostle speaks there, of a man in an Afflicted condition, and speaks to such in an Afflicted condition, as those that need Wisdom, both for the managing of their condition, and for the making a right judgment of it. He telleth them, what they must do, they must ask this Wisdom of God. It is as if the Apostle should say, When you are in such a condition, you need wisdom.

1. Wisdom, to discern God's end in it, and to find out the meaning of God, in a Dispensation. When we receive outward good things, from the Hand of God, or Afflictions, whether it be for good, or evil; It tends much, to the quieting, and and satisfying our Spirits in a condition, when we can find out, what is God's end in it.

2. Wis-

2. Wisdom, to find out our duty in a condition. There are seasonable, and proper duties, which belong to, and become every providence and dispensation. Now here is Wisdom, to find them out, and to know what we have to do in our condition. It is said of the men of *Issachar*, *1 Chron. 12. 32. They had understanding of the times, and knew what Israel ought to do.* So, there is wisdom required of a man, to know what to do in every condition. As one, being invited to a Feast, asked the Philosopher, who was his Tutor, How he should behave himself; *Remember thou art a King's Son, (i.e.) Behave thy self, as becometh thy Birth, and Dignity.* So here is Wisdom, to know the duties of our condition, and accordingly to behave our selves.

3. Wisdom, to regulate, and moderate our affections, and passions, in a condition. That a man be not too much taken with the comforts, nor too much troubled with the crosses of a condition. Now for the attaining of this Wisdom, the Apostle gives this Direction, that we must ask of God.

2. He that will make a judgment of his condition, must be much in searching himself, to see what he is in a condition. I have said before, The condition is to be judged of by the person, and that conditions are to men, as they are to, and in, their conditions. Here is the mistake of many, they go to make a judgment of their conditions, before they make a judgment of themselves. Our Saviour speaketh, in *Mat. 7. 3, 4.* of them that see a *Mote in their Brothers eye, and discern not the Beam that is in their own eye.* They would go about to reform others, before they reform themselves.

Thus

Thus some would go to make a judgment of conditions; before they make a judgment of themselves; and that Ignorance is a Beam in their eyes, that keeps them from discerning a condition. There are some (as I have shewed you) to whom every condition is a Curse; and some, to whom every condition is a Blessing. The great thing we are to do, is, to see of which number we are. *Psal. 77.* we find *Ver. 1, 2.* *David* was in an Afflicted condition, and see what he doth in that condition. First, he sought the Lord, *Ver. 2.* *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* He made his Addressees to God. Secondly, he fell upon a search of himself, *Ver. 6.* *I communed with my own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.* Where we see, he both sought the Lord, and searched Himself. So that before a man can make a perfect judgment of a condition, there must be a searching of himself. There must be a communing with his own heart. We must understand our selves, before we can understand our condition. *Eccles. 9. 2.* *No man knoweth love or hatred, by what is before him.* When a man looks only upon the outward Dispensation, (*viz.*) Riches, and Honour, on the one hand; and Crosses, and Afflictions on the other: A man may pore upon these, all the dayes of his life, and yet be never the wiser; he may stare on them, till his eyes drop out, and yet not know, whether they are good, or evil for him, whether they speak love or hatred. But then you will ask, What should a man do in this case, that he may know? He must not look so much on things without him, as things within him; he must not so much eye, what his condition is, as what he is in his condition. It is not

not for a man to look what God doth without, but he must look what God hath done within him; to know the meaning of an outward Dispensation. Hath God made you one of His? hath He shed his Love abroad in your hearts? hath He given you, the New Name, which none knoweth, but he that hath it? have you, the Engravings of Heaven on your Spirits? have you Love to Jesus, written upon your hearts? and Holiness to Jehovah, upon your Fore-heads? By this, you may know the meaning of a condition. As it was said of *Luther*, That he knew, what was done in Heaven, by what was done in his own heart. Much more may we know the meaning of what is done on earth, by what is done within us. The outward Dispensation is dumb, and saith nothing of it self, in respect of Love and Hatred; it is something within a man, that must speak that. There is an expression, *Psal. 25. 14. The Secret of the Lord, is with them that fear Him, and he will shew them His Covenant.* We must know, in Gods Dispositions, there is a Secret; a Secret of Love, and a Secret of Hatred, and this lyeth hid in the Dispensation; so that a man, may look long enough upon the outward dispensation, and not see the Secret, that is in the dispensation. Now the Godly Man, and he that feareth God, knoweth this Secret of a Dispensation. God sheweth such a one His Covenant, so that he finds all coming in by Covenant, let it be what it will, whether outward Blessings, or outward Afflictions. In a word, Those that will make a judgment of their outward condition, must know, that all is Good, to those that are Good; and all is Evil, to those that are Evil. Wrath, and Hatred, and Hell, are written

ten on a wicked Mans outward mercies, and on a wicked Mans outward miseries. Hell is Engraven, on the very Tooth-ach of a Reprobate. As on the contrary, Love is written, not only upon the Mercies, but also upon the Miseries, of a Godly Man. Blessedness is engraven upon his Afflictions, and Persecutions. So you see, that he, who will make a judgment of his condition, must first make a judgment of himself.

3. He that will make a judgment of his outward condition, must be sure, to take a right view of his condition. The not doing this, is one great reason, why so many have been so grossly mistaken about conditions, calling Good, Evil; and Evil, Good. We know, when a mans judgment is asked, concerning the goodness and value of a thing, he will first view it, before he gives his judgment of it. So we must do concerning conditions, view, before we judg. But you will ask, How may a man come to take a right view of his condition, that he be not mistaken about it? For Answer to that, take these Directions.

1. He that will take a right view of a condition, must view it by Scripture Light. *David* was mistaken, about conditions, till he went into the Sanctuary, and by the Light there, he saw, what he did not before discern. Many men, set up false lights, and view conditions by them, (*viz.*) the Judgment and Opinions of others, and their own Apprehensions and Imaginations; These are Glasses, through which, many look upon conditions, which make but false Representations. Some tell us, In
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the Opticks, there is a Glass, that will represent a foul dirty way, so green and pleasant, as if it were covered with Carpets. Through such false Glasses, do many view their conditions. There are Magnifying Glasses, that will represent the Object, far bigger then it is; that will make a small Fly, seem a Hornet; a Straw, a Staff; and a grain of Mustard-seed, a Bean. Such a Glass, a mans own apprehension, and imagination is, in the viewing of his condition. They make the things of a condition, seem bigger to us, then they are. Thus sometimes, the comforts of a condition, and the crosses of a condition, are represented to us, bigger than they are. Now, he that will take a right view of a condition, must lay aside these false lights and glasses, and must view his condition, by Scripture-Light. And that for these reasons:

1. The Scripture will help a man, to make a true discovery of the things of a condition. The Scripture giveth us the best account of what the things of a prosperous condition are, (*viz.*) Riches and Honour, &c. And it gives us the best account, what Losses, and Crosses, and Afflictions are. As for the first, The Scripture telleth us, *They are all but Vanity*. And that the best things of this world, stand upon two lame Leggs, (*viz.*) Uncertainty, and Insufficiency. Nay, it is observable, it doth not tell us the vanity of outward things, only Notionally, but delivereth it to us as a Truth, that hath been Experimented and Tryed, by those who both had a Will, and also Ability, to make the
Expe-

Experiment. Thus you find *Solomon* did ; and, in the Book of the *Ecclesiastes*, we have him, giving in his Experiments, concerning the best of outward things, in this short Sentence, *All is vanity*. And then for Afflictions, the Scripture sets up a Light for us, for the taking a right view of them. And telleth us, what Verdicts have been passed, by those who have had Tryals of them. Among others, *David*, who said, *It was good for him, that he was Afflicted*. To close this : Scripture Light, in respect of this particular, must needs be a great advantage to a man, in his taking a view of his condition.

2. The Scripture will help us to view a condition, by discovering to us, What those things are, that make a condition good, and without which a condition is not good. The Scripture is much, in making out to men, what it is, that is good indeed. *Solomon*, in his *Ecclesiastes*, sheweth the mistakes of men, concerning Happiness, and makes it appear by Experience, that it did not lie in Honours, or Pleasures, or Riches, &c. And observe how he closeth his Book, with a discovery of that, wherein mans Happiness lieth, *Chap. 12. 13.* Hear the conclusion of the whole matter, *Fear God, and keep his Commandements, for this is the whole duty of man*. It is the *Totum hominis*, the whole, and the All of man. The Scripture, doth not only discover to men, what the good and evil of this world is ; but also, what it is, that is good indeed, without which, a condition is not good, and with which, a condition is not evil. It sheweth a man, That, without controversy, this is good for a man in this life, (*viz.*) Pardon, and Peace, and Union
with

with God, and an Interest in Jesus Christ, &c. Thus the Scripture helpeth a man, in viewing, by directing him to discover, what is good indeed, and makes a condition good to a man. It holds out a clear light to a man, by which he may find out, what it is, that speaks his condition good. *Augustin* said, of *Tullies* Works, They were once sweet to him, but now he found, no sweetness in them, because he found not *Jesus*, mentioned in them. The Scripture directs us, in the viewing of a condition, to do, as a man doth, when he cometh into a Richly-furnished-Shop, seeking after some rare piece of ware; though many be brought to his hand, yet he layeth them all aside, till he find the piece he desireth, and looks for. So it is in viewing the good of a condition, the Scripture will direct a man, to lay all aside, till he come to discern, that which is good indeed. In a prosperous condition, when Honour, and Riches, &c. come to hand, it teacheth him, to put the question to himself, Are there not better things then these? So in an Afflicted condition, it teacheth a man, to lay his Crosses, and Troubles, and Afflictions aside, and to put the question to himself, Whether there be not greater evils than those? And whether evils of Sinning, be not greater, than evils of Suffering. The Scripture teacheth a man, to view a condition, as *Samuel* did the Sons of *Jesse*, to find out *David*, whom the Lord had chosen. *Jesse* brings forth his Eldest Son, *Samuel* said, That is not he: he then, brought his seaven Sons before him, And *Samuel* answered, Neither hath the Lord chosen any of these: and then he cometh to *David*, who was the man looked after. In taking a view
of

view of conditions, we must know, the Rule is this, In viewing a Prosperous Condition, you may see Honour, and Riches, and other things of the world, passing by you; But, put them by, bid them stand aside: Tell them, They are not the things, that make a man happy. So, in the taking a view, of an Afflicted condition, many evils may present themselves to us; But the Scripture telleth us, That these are not the evils, that we are to look upon, as the worst of evils.

3. The Scripture doth thus help us, in taking a view of our conditions; It unvayles conditions, and unfoldeth the Mysteries of a Condition; without which, a man cannot take a right view, nor make a right judgment of his condition. We find *David*, stumbling at the prosperity of Wicked men, and at the adversity of Godly Men; He knew not, what to think of it, When he saw waters of a full cup, wrung out to the one, and waters of Affliction to the other; he began to think, that he was on the wrong side, and that he had made a wrong choice: And these words were coming out of his mouth, *That he had cleansed his heart in vain.* (i. e.) He was about to say, It was in vain for him, and others, to be Godly, if thus they were dealt with, in this life; if they must be afflicted, and chastened, while wicked men have, what heart can wish. Now, how came *David*, to have his Judgment rectified, concerning these Dispensations of God? He telleth us, He went into the Sanctuary, and there he understood the Mystery of these Dispensations: There he found the Riddle Unfolded, and these Providences Unvayled. The Word of God, will help us, to Interpret the Works of

God. It will help us to see within the vail of a condition, and to see the Wheel within the wheel. It will teach us, not only to look on the Motions of the wheels without, but will shew us, the Motions of the Wheels within. *Jer. 12. 1.* he puts the question, *Why doth the way of the Wicked prosper?* He viewed their condition, and wondred at it. It was a mystery to him, that such men should prosper, that did deal very Treacherously. The Prophet did not at first understand the Mystery; Had he gon into the Sanctuary, he would have found, The way of the wicked did not prosper. And he found it afterwards, as appeareth *vers. 3.* *Pull them out, as Sheep for the Slaughter, &c.* q. d. Lord, I partly see into the Mystery of this Dispensation; I find that their prosperity, is but a preparing them, for the day of Slaughter. That thou dost deal with them, as men do with those Beasts they intend for the Slaughter; They put them into the fattest Grounds, and the best Pastures. Scripture teacheth a man, in viewing a condition, to view it upon both sides: and indeed, till a man do so, he will never make a right view of a condition. Conditions are like that Cloud, by which God guided the Children of *Israel* through the Wilderness; they have their bright, and their black side. Some in viewing a condition, look only upon it's bright side, when the condition may have a black side. So, some in viewing a prosperous condition, look only upon the bright side, whereas, if they looked upon the other side, they would find it black, and dismal. So concerning an adverse condition, some look only upon the black side, and see nothing but what is sad; whereas, if they looked upon the other

ther side of their condition, they might see It Bright, and Guilded with Love.

4. By Scripture-Light, we see another thing, (*viz.*) How to improve a condition. We can never take a right view of a condition, till we view It with it's Improvements. It is in viewing, and making a judgment of conditions, as it is in a Husband-man's viewing of Lands; He considereth, Whether they are to be Improved. Though they seem Bare, and Barren, yet he considereth, Whether they may not be improved to be worth somuch an Acre. So, the right viewing of conditions, is, to view them, with their Improvements. Now the Scripture helpeth us in this particular.

1. It will shew us, How the Saints of Old, improved their conditions. How they Husbanded, both Prosperous, and Adverse Conditions, and what they made of them. And thus it helpeth us, to view a condition with It's Improvements. As the Scripture sheweth us, What the Saints of Old, were in their several Generations; so what they were in their several Conditions; when they were High, and Low; Rich, and Poor. It shews us, How *Job* Improved his Condition, when he was *Job* the Wealthy, and Honourable; And how he Improved his condition, when he was *Job* the Miserable and Afflicted. It sheweth us, what *David* made of his condition, when he was *David* the King, and when he was *David* the Persecuted. *Plutarch* wrote a Treatise, to shew, How a man might get profit by an Enemy. The Scripture is such in shewing us, how to make profit of conditions, and that by setting before us, the Improvements that others have made of them.

7. The Scripture teacheth us, the Art of improving them. It not only sheweth us, that they are improvable, but withal sheweth us, how we may improve them. There is a Story of a Romane, who was Accused of Witch-craft; The Reason given was this, That when his Neighbours Land brought forth little, his brought forth abundantly, though there was but a hedg betwixt them. So this was the Charge, That by Witch-craft, he drew all the Strength, and Fatness of their Soyl into his, and by that means, Enriched his own Land, and Impoverished theirs: Being brought before the Judges, he brought forth all the Tools, and Instruments, which he used in the Tilling, and Manuring of his Land: and answered, *Hæc sunt veneficia mea*, These are my Witch-crafts; And withal, told his Judges, I am at Work, when my Neighbors are asleep; I Work, when they Play: They are negligent, and use not that kind of Husbandry that I do; and this is the true Reason, why my Crop exceeds theirs. Concerning conditions, it is thus, There is such an Art of improving them, that some may be great Gainers, when others get nothing by them. This Art the Scripture teacheth us, How to make a Spiritual Advantage of Temporal Conditions. This is an Art, that Philosophy teacheth not. Indeed, Philosophy teacheth the Art of Moral improvements of conditions, but not Spiritual; Scripture onely teacheth that. Alchymists tell us, There is an Art, of turning Baser Mettalls, into Gold. Philosophy goeth thus far, to teach us the Art, of turning conditions (as I may say) into Brass, or Copper, or Silver; but it can never teach us the Art, of turning them into Gold;

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The Scripture only teacheth that. Whosoever readeth the Works of *Tully*, *Seneca*, and others of that sort, shall find indeed, excellent Directions, for the Moral improvement of conditions; but as for a Spiritual improvement, they tell you nothing. That was above their reach, and their light did not attain unto it. Now this great Art, the Scripture teacheth; it teacheth a man the Art, of making Thorns, bear Grapes; and of making Thistles, bear Figs. (*i.e.*) When a condition is Thorny, and Prickly, the Scripture sheweth a man, that he may gather sweet and pleasant Fruit, from the Thorns, and Thistles, of his Condition. As the Apostle saith, *Heb. 12. 11.* That *Affliction* yieldeth the quiet Fruit of Righteousness. Where you see Thorns, bearing Grapes. In a word, The Scripture teacheth a man the Art, of Sayling by the Wind of a Condition, let it blow from what quarter it will. It is reported, That those that Sayle into the *Indies*, find in some places, the Winds blow constantly for six Months one way, and for the other six Months, quite contrary. Let the Wind of a condition, blow which way it will, either from the North, or from the South; yet the Scripture teacheth a Christian, the skill of setting his Sayles so, as that they shall further him in his Voyage towards Heaven.

5. By Scripture-Light, a man cometh to discern the dangers of a condition. To discover what Rocks, and Shelves, are in the Sea of every condition, that he may know how to avoyd them. A man can never take a right view of a condition, till he hath viewed it, with it's Dangers, Snares, and Temptations. Of these, the Scripture makes a Discovery two wayes.

1. By

1. By way of Caution. So it Cautions men, concerning the dangers of a Condition, both Prosperous and Adverse. As you may see, *Deut. 6. 11, 12.* and *Deut. 8. 11, 12, 13.* *When thou hast eaten; and art full; Take heed thou forget not the Lord thy God.* Forgetfulness of God, is that, that is to be taken heed of in a prosperous condition. The Scripture is frequent in giving such Cautions, *1 Tim. 6. 17.* *Psal. 62. 10.* *Jer. 9. 23.* *Let not the Rich Man glory in his Riches, &c.*

2. The Scripture presents us, with the Examples of those, that have miscarried, and fallen by their conditions. It sheweth us, against what Rocks, some in their Saying, have dashed their Ships. *Deut. 32. 15.* *Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked.* *Neh. 13. 26.* we find how *Solomon* miscarried in his Prosperity. *Nebuchadnezzar* said in that condition, *Dan. 4. 30.* *Is not this great Babel that I have built, &c?* In Scripture, you have the Saints set out to us, as in their Graces, so in their Sins. You have heard (saith the Apostle) of the patience of *Job*; so from the same Scripture, we hear likewise of his impatience. As it acquaints us with the pride of *Israel*, when they were in their prosperity; so with their murmuring, and repining, when they were in adversity. *2 Chron. 32. 25.* it is said of *Hezekiah*, *After he was recovered; that he rendred not again, according to what the Lord had done to him; for his heart was lifted up.*

6. Scripture-Light, discovereth another thing concerning Conditions ; And that is this, What are the Alloys, and Correctives, of a Condition ; without the knowledg of which, we can never take a right view of Conditions. On the one hand, the pleasantness of a condition may deceive us ; and, on the other hand, the seeming ill-favouredness of a condition, may make us mistaken, in making a judgment of it. The Scripture discovereth this to us, What are the true Correctives of a Condition ? What may allay the Sweetness, and Pleasantness of Prosperity, that they be not too much lifted up ? And what will correct the bitter ingredients of an Afflicted Condition, that they be not too much dejected and cast down ? It is sometimes with men in conditions, as it is with those that go to Sea, of whom the Psalmist speaketh, *Psalm 107. 26. They mount up to the Heavens, and they go down again to the depths.* So it is in conditions. A man in a prosperous condition, when the waters of a condition are full, he is apt to be high, and high-minded : But he must know, waters of a condition may fall, and that conditions have their depths. There are the full Tides, and the Ebbs of a condition. It is sometimes full Sea with a man ; the comforts of a condition, flow in a pace, and then a man is apt to be lifted up. And then there is the ebb of a condition, when there is a decrease, and diminishing of those comforts ; and then men are apt to faint, and be cast down. Now, Scripture-Light discovereth to us, what helps we have in this case. We know how it is with Fishermens Nets, They have Lead, to make them sinck ; and they have Cork at them, to make them swim.

And both these are in Scripture, put upon outward conditions.

1. For a Prosperous Condition, There is Lead put upon it, to keep a man Low, and Humble; and to Sink him in that condition. The Scripture telleth us, of the Vanity of Riches, and Honour, &c. It telleth us, of the Brevity, Uncertainty, and Insufficiency, that is in the Best of outward things. Wichal, it acquaints us, with the Temptations, Cares, Troubles, Disquietments, wherewith those things are attended. It telleth us, That the increasfing of them, is but the increasfing of Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit. Again, it telleth us this, That a mans happines lieth not in them; that a man may have them, and yet be miserable; and that, being vanity, they cannot cure a mans vanity. Now this is some of the Lead, that the Scripture putteth to a prosperous condition, to keep men low, and humble in it. The consideration of these things, are as Ballast to a Ship, which makes it Sayl evenly, and steadily. When a man is in a prosperous condition, his spirit is apt to be lifted up; and so it needs Ballast, to keep it from Fleeting at random, upon the waters of prosperity. Now the Scripture is much in shewing, what it is that should keep the Spirit low, in a high condition. Thus, *1Tim.6.17. Charge them that are Rich in this world, that they be not high-minded; and that they trust not in uncertain Riches.* (Observe); There is the Ballast,

Ballast, and there is the Lead, to keep down the Spirit in a Rich condition, (*viz.*) They are uncertain Riches, 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31. *Brethren, the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away.* q. d. Remember, The time is short, for your enjoying of the comforts of this life, and the fashion of the world goeth away; the world is upon Gate; and Marrying, and Buying, and Selling, &c. will shortly have an end. I shall close this, with that place, *Jam. 1. 10. Let the Rich rejoyce, in that he is made low;* The Explications of the place are divers, but without doubt, the meaning of the Apostle is this, (when he saith) *Let him that is Rich, rejoyce in this, that he is made low.* That is, There is no Rich man, but hath reason to be low, and humble, if he doth rightly consider his condition. And that this is the meaning, appears by the following words, *For as the flower of Grass he shall pass away.* i. e. The beauty and glory of his condition, is but fading, and vanishing, like the Flower of Grass. Here is Lead, to make the Spirit sinck, in a high and prosperous Condition.

2. Concerning an Adverse Condition, There the Scripture comes in with Cork, to make it Swim, and to keep up the Spirit of a man in that condition. That we may not be too much cast down; it hath it's Correctives for the crosses of a condition, and somewhat to allay the bitterness of such a condition. It presents us with somewhat,
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that helps to keep the head above water, and to keep a man from drowning, when the waters of Affliction overflow. Scripture puts somewhat under, to hold up the Spirit in that condition; (*viz.*) Promises, and Comforts, suited to such a Condition; With God's End in Afflicting; With the sweet Fruit of Afflictions; With what Good many have gotten by their Conditions; With what Afflictions are, being compared with the Glory that is to be Revealed. These considerations are as Cork, that the Scripture puts to an Adverse Condition. 2 Cor. 1. 5. *As our Sufferings for Christ abound in us, so our Consolations through Christ abound.* Those Consolations are Cork to the Condition. The Apostle saith, Jam. 1. 9. *Let the Brother of low degree rejoyce, in that he is exalted.* He speaks there, to Christians that were in a low, and Suffering condition. And see, there was Cork, to make them hold up their heads, and swim in that condition; (saith the Apostle) *he is Exalted.* According to to the Original it is, *iv tō ōlōi dōlō*, in his sublimity, being a brother, he is a Member of Christ. And the Apostle setteth before Christians, the Dignity and Honour of their Spiritual Estate; to Counter-poyse the Misery, and Obscurity of Afflictions. Thus the Scripture sheweth a man, How he may be preserved from the dangers, of the heights and depths of conditions; that neither prosperity may lift him up too high, nor adver-

adversity cast him down too low; but that a Christian may have an equal Spirit, in unequal conditions. There is nothing we have in a Prosperous Condition, but we have it by Divine Donation: And why should a Christian then be lifted up, when he hath nothing but what he hath received? And there is nothing befalling us in an Afflicted Condition, but what is by Divine Ordination; and why should we then fret at it? To close this, The Scripture teacheth a man, how to keep himself Sober in Prosperity, that he be not overcome with the Sweet and Pleasant Wine of that Condition: And also, Sober in Adversity, that he be not overcome with the Gall and Wormwood of that Condition. The Scripture speaketh of a Drunkenness, that is incident to an Afflicted condition, *Isa. 51. 21. Hear thou this, thou Afflicted, and Drunken, but not with Wine.*

Thus for the First Direction, for the taking a right View of Conditions. It must be done by Scripture-Light.

CHAP. X.

II. **H**E that will take a right View of a Condition, must take a right Standing for the Viewing of it. Conditions must be viewed at a due and convenient Distance: It is in the viewing of a Condition, as it is in the viewing of a Picture; the Art in Drawing, is best discerned at some convenient distance. The reason why many are mistaken about their Conditions, is, Their setting their Conditions too near them, when they take a View of them. Thus they set the Comforts of a condition, and the Crosses of a condition, so near to them, that they cannot take a right View of them. It is with men, in this Case, as it is with a man in the midst of a great Wood; or in the midst of a great City. When he is at some distance from them, he hath a fuller View of them, than when he was in the midst of them, because his sight is bounded, and terminated, that he can see but a little way. He seeth, it may be, but a Street, or some part of a Street; When, being but at some convenient Distance from the City, and having a little advantage of Ground, he hath a full view of the City, in respect of Greatness, Length, Circuit, &c. Thus it is, in respect of conditions; When a man is in the midst of the comforts of a condition, in the midst of his Honour, Wealth, and Prosperity, he seeth but a little way, and cannot take a full View of his condition. So it is, when a man is in the midst of his Crosses, and Afflictions, he

he discerneth but a little of his condition. And thus, not taking a right View of their Conditions, they make a false Judgement of them. *Solomon hath a passage, Prov. 18. 1. Through desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh, or intermedleth, with all wisdom.* The words are diversly interpreted. In the Margin we read thus, *He that separateth himself, seeketh according to his desire, and intermedleth in every business.* The meaning seemeth to be this, That a man, that seeketh after Wisdom and Knowledge, hath his retirements; His desire of Wisdom, makes him sometimes come off from his secular employments, and set them at a distance from him. It makes him sequester himself from all his worldly Businesses, that he may seek after Wisdom; and that he may be the freer for Study, and Meditation, and a consideration of things, What they are. Thus it is, in respect of Conditions. If a man will take a right View of his condition, and will get Wisdom, to make a judgment of it; he must, for a while, (as I may say) separate himself from it, and look upon it at some Distance. The Apostle gives this Direction, for the taking of a right View of conditions, *1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31. Let those that have Wives, be as though they had none; and they that Rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not; and they that Possess, as though they possessed not, &c.* This sheweth us, that then we take a right View of things, when we look on them at a distance. Those things are worst seen, that we are on the same side with. An House is best viewed, when we are on the other side the Street. So it is in respect of Conditions; we should view the condition, as though we were not in the condition. And so
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for an Afflicted condition, we should view it at a distance. *Let them* (saith the Apostle) *that weep, be as though they wept not.* Thus the best view of a condition, is, To look upon a condition, to view it upon the other side of the Street, to view it at a Distance. It is often-times Self in a condition, that hinders from taking a right View of a condition. If we could separate our selves from our Conditions, and look upon them, as other mens Conditions, and not our own, we should take the better View of them. There was a Nobleman of this Nation, who had three of his Sons drowned together in the River of Trent: The Father had not, as yet, received the sad tydings of their Deaths. It was thought good he should be prepared for the tydings, before they came. Upon this account, was that Learned, and Prudent Prelate, Bishop King, desired to go to him. He very wisely managed the business. He did not, at first, tell the Nobleman what was befallen him; but fell upon a General discourse of an Afflicted condition, and so gave the Nobleman a view of his condition afar off. The Nobleman assented to all the Bishop said, and answered, That if God should bring him into such a condition, he did hope, he should be content, and submit to His will. Upon this, the Bishop brings the condition nearer to him, and putteth this Question to him: *Admit the Lord should take from you, your worldly Enjoyments, your outward Comforts; and should break off the Olive-Bran-ches from about your Table.* The Nobleman answered, That he hoped he should be therewith content. Upon this, the Bishop came nearer, and told him, It was his condition, *That his Sons were drowned;* and

and therefore desired him to do as he had said; If he had, at first, shewed him what was his condition, he had been at a losse, in taking a View of it. Herein was the Prudence of the Bishop seen, In giving him a View of it at a distance. So the best way for the taking a right View of conditions, is, To view them at a distance.

Thus for the general Directions, concerning

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by those, That will make a Judgment of Conditions.

I come now to the Particular Directions, Concerning the making a Judgement of Conditions: And so, how a man may know, What is good for him in this life. So here we are to shew, How a man may make a Judgement, both of a Prosperous, and Adverse Condition.

1. Concerning the making a Judgement of a Prosperous condition. The Question is this:

Question. How may a Man know, That a Prosperous condition is good for a man in this Life?

Answ. By these things a Man may know it.

1. If outward prosperity, be no hindrance, to Inward and Spiritual Prosperity. It was the Wish of St. John, concerning *Gaius*, 3. *Epist. V. 2. I wish thou mayest Prosper and be in Health, even as thy Soul Prospereth.* Some think, that *Gaius* had a Sickly Body, but an Healthy Soul. The contrary is seen by many, They have Healthy, and Prospering Bodies, but Unhealthy, and Unprospering Souls. Thus it is with many, They have Prospering

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Estates, but Poor, and Unprospering Souls. Their outwards, eat up their inwards; As *Pharaohs* lean Kine, did eat up the Fat. There are many, whose worldly Riches, do eat up their Spiritual. Though they are Rich in the world, yet they are not Rich towards God, and in respect of their Souls. How many are there, whom outward Fulness causeth to despise the Hony-Comb of the Gospel? Remember this, When a mans outward condition, is accompanied with the Soul's improsperity, it is naught for him. When, in a prosperous condition, men are thoughtless of their Soul's prosperity; This speaketh a condition Evil for a man.

2. We may know it thus, If we use the things of a Prosperous Condition with right Considerations,

1. Of their Changeableness.
2. Of their Dangerfulness.
3. Of their Usefulness.
4. Of their Inferiority.
5. Of their Emptiness.
6. Of our own Mortality.
7. Of the Accompt to be given.

1. If we use them, with a right Consideration of their Changeableness. Some there are, who, when they are set upon a Mountain of Prosperity, think their Mountain to be so Strong, that it cannot be Removed. This was *Dauids* fault, when he said in his Prosperity, *He should never be removed.* *Job* telleth us, That in the day of his Prosperity, he thought of Adversity. He looked upon the things of his condition as changeable, and so he found

found them to be; when of the Richest man in the East, he became the poorest man in the world. We must know, The best things of a condition, are mutable: The Comforts of a condition, may become Crosses. Children are looked upon as Comforts; And yet we read of *Augustus*, that he had three Daughters, and that they proved such crosses to him, that he was wont to call them, His *Tria Carcinomata*, His three Ulcers or Botches: And he was often heard to say, *Utinam vel calebs vixissem, vel orbus periissem*. Oh, that I had either lived Unmarried, or dyed Childless. It is then right, When we use the things of a Prosperous Condition with right Considerations of their Vanity, Brevity, Mortality, Mutability. There was an Ambassador from a Great Prince, that had this Sentence Engraven upon his Watch, which he read once every day, *Favour may turn into Disfavour, and Grace into Disgrace*. But of this, I have spoken in a former Tract.

2. When we use the things of a prosperous condition, with the consideration of their dangerousness; that they are things in which men Usually sin, and in which they may Easily sin. When we consider, what snares and temptations attend that condition; and thereupon, we become more watchful. But of this we have spoken before, and shall but touch it here.

3. When we use the things of a condition, with the right consideration of their Usefulness; that as they are things useful, so to consider, what use we make of them. As they are easily made matter of sin, so they may be made matter of duty. In this the excellency of a gracious heart is seen, in mak-

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ing Duty out of that, out of which others make Sin. *Luke 16. 9. Make you friends (saith our Saviour) of the unrighteous Mammon.* Where Riches are called Unrighteous Mammon, as for other reasons so chiefly for this, Because they are the things that men easily, and usually sin in. Yet our Saviour sheweth, they have their usefulness, When he saith, *Make you friends of them.* So then, Would a man know, whether prosperity be good for him; I would ask him this, What use he doth make of the things of a prosperous condition? Prosperity is to a man, as a man useth it: *1 Cor. 7. 31.* The Apostle speaketh, *of using the world, as not abusing it.* Now, a thing is then abused, when it is not put to the use for which it was given; but put to wrong uses. Thus there is an abusing of the world, and the things of a prosperous condition, when we put them to wrong uses. Thus, many abuse their Honour, and abuse their Riches, &c. when they make this use of them, To feed their lusts, to harden their hearts against God and His Word, to raise their Names and Families, to Oppress their Brethren, to make them proud, and high-minded: This is making that use of them, that they were not given for; and this is abusing them. God never gave these things, to be food for mens lusts, to feed their pride, and to feed their covetousness. He never gave Riches, and Honour, and Possessions to men, to make them proud, and high-minded. Thus, many abuse the good things of this life; Their Wealth, their Apparell, their very Meat, and Drink; by putting them to other uses then God intended them for. As the Lord complaineth, *Hos. 2. 8. She did not know, that I gave*
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her Corn, and Wine, and Oyle, and multiplied their Silver, and their Gold, which they prepared for Baal. They put those things to other uses, then God intended them for. God never gave those things for that end, To serve *Baal*, and their Idols with them. Thus we see, how the Lord telleth *Israel* of her mis-using, and abusing the things of her Prosperity, *Ezek.* 16. 10, 11, 12, 13. He telleth her, what He had done for her, how He had Cloathed her with Broidered Garments, and fine Linnen, and Silk; He had decked her with Ornaments, Chains, Bracelets, Jewels, and Gold; He gave her fine Flower, and Hony, and Oyle. Now see, to what uses she put these things, you shall find, to such uses as God never intended them for; as you may see, *Vers.* 16, 17, 18, 19. of the said Chapter, *They bestowed all upon Idols.* The Lord saith, *Jer.* 7. 31. *Of their burning their Sons, and Daughters, in the fire, and Sacrificing them to the Idols, that he commanded them not, neither came it into his heart.* So we may say, that many put the things of this life, to that Use that God never commanded, neither ever intended. So then, in a prosperous condition, we should put this Question to our selves, What use we make of the things of the condition? In a prosperous condition, Two things are to be eyed by us, for the making a right use of the things of the condition.

1. Precepts.

2. Patterns.

1. Precepts in the Scripture, commanding us to what use to put the things of a prosperous condition. The Scripture a-

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bounds in them, *Prov. 3. 9. Honour the Lord with thy substance. Dent. 28. 47.* where we may see, what is our Duty by the Threatning. *Because thou didst not serve the Lord with joyfulness, and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore, &c.* Where see, What is a man Duty when he is in a prosperous condition? It is this, When God giveth abundance of all things, that we should serve Him with joyfulness, and gladness of heart. God doth not give abundance to men, that they should live more proudly, but that they should serve Him more chearfully. When He enlargeth our estates, He expecteth the enlargement of our hearts toward Him in Duty, and Service. *1 Tim. 6. 18. Charge them (saith the Apostle) that are Rich in this world, that they do good, and be ready to distribute, willing to communicate. And Vers. 19. Laying up in store for themselves, a good Foundation, &c.* Where he sheweth, what uses men should put their Riches to, (*viz.*) to do good with them, to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked. And then, to lay up a good Foundation for the time to come. Some men make only this use of their Riches, to lay a foundation of Greatness for themselves, and families, and posterity, for time to come in this world; but neglect laying a good foundation for themselves to Eternity. Thus for the Precepts of the Word, concerning the Use we should make of the things of a prosperous condition.

2. We must eye Patterns, and see what uses the Saints have made of the things of a prosperous condition. Thus you have *David's* example, *2 Sam.* 7. 1. when God had given him peace, and prosperity, he considereth how he might honour God, with what God had given him; and so resolveth upon building a House for God: And when he found it was the mind of God, that he should not do it, but his son *Solomon*; he thereupon, did bequeath his Gold, and his Silver, to *Solomon* for that use; and stirred up the Princes, and Nobles, to do the like, *1 Chron.* 29. 12. *Riches and Honour* (saith he) *come from thee: and ver. 13. All things come from Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.* Thus you may see what use *Job* made of the things his prosperity, *Job* 29. 12, 13, &c. You will there see, what use he made of his Honour, Power, and Wealth:

4. When we use the things of a prosperous condition, with a right consideration of their Inferi-
ority, and Subordination, in relation to higher things. This consideration, will keep us from setting our Hearts, and Affections on them. It will make us set Honour and Riches, and the Best things of this Life, upon the foot-stool, and not upon the throne of our Hearts. In a prosperous condition, we are to set the things of it in their due place. Some there are, who set them so high, as though they were the only things; when, as they are but *bona Scabelli*, the good things of the Foot-stool. It is then Evil, when we have a higher e-

seem of them, than we ought to have. Remember, These are not the things that are to have the preeminence. The Apostle exhorts us, *Col. 3. 1.* To those seek things that are Above; and *ver. 2.* To set our affections on the things Above, and not on the things of the Earth. He speaketh there of two sorts of Things; There are τὰ ἄνω, the things Above; And τὰ κάτω, or, as the Apostle saith, τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ, the things of the Earth: And biddeth us Seek, and set our affections upon the things that are Above. He useth two words, viz. Ζητῶντε, which notes, seeking with the whole strength, and endeavour; And φρονῶντε, which notes, The minding of those things with the whole Soul. This sheweth, a man is not to look upon the best things of this Life, as those things that are the Best. They are to have no more degrees of Affection, then there are degrees of Good in them. It was good Counsel, that one gave to a near Relation of mine, concerning his Horse; When she saw him too much taken with him, she said, Sir, love a Horse, as a Horse. So we should the Creature, but as the Creature; and the things of the world, as the things that are inferior to the things of another World. So, then it is right, when we use the Good things of this life, with a consideration of their Inferiority.

5. When we use the things of a prosperous condition, with a right consideration of their Emptiness and vanity. When your condition is fullest, yet you look upon the things of your condition as empty, and that will not give satisfaction to the Soul. As their Inferiority speaketh them unsuitable, to the spirit of man; so their emptiness, speaketh them unsatisfactory. It is happy with

a man, when he is in a high condition, that he can look upon the things of his condition, as low things; and when he is in a full condition, to look upon all the things of this condition, as empty. When God changeth our condition, then (it may be) we can do it. Then we can say, Now I see, that Honour, and Riches, are but vain and empty things. But it is best, when a man can, in the height of his Prosperity, give such a Censure of them. When *Gilimer*, King of the *Vandals*, was brought prisoner before *Justinian*, sitting in Majesty upon his Throne, he cried out, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*. This he did, in his Adverse Condition, when he stood prisoner at the Bar. They were the words of *Solomon*; but uttered by him, when he was in the height of his Prosperity, and when he sat upon the Throne. The consideration of the emptiness, and vanity, that is in the best things of a prosperous condition, will keep a man from taking up with them: It will keep a man from being deceived by them, as promising more than they can perform. Our Saviour speaketh of the deceitfulness of Riches, *Mat. 13. 22.* the Greek word; is, *ἡ ἀπάτη*, the imposture, and fallacy of Riches. It signifieth, a drawing out of the way. So there is a deceitfulness in the things of a prosperous condition; they are apt to draw a man out of the way, to look for comfort, and contentment in them, when it is not to be found. This consideration, will prevent those Dreams that a man is apt to have in that Condition. As we read, *Isai. 29. 8.* of the dreams of the hungry and thirsty man, that he Dreams he Eates and Drinks, but when he awakes, *his Soul is empty*. Some there are, that Dream of

contentment, and satisfaction in their condition, that at last find it but a phantasie, and a dream. Those then, that would make a Judgment of a prosperous condition, must put the question to themselves, Whether they use the things of their condition, with a consideration of their emptiness? We say of Wells, when they want Water, that they are empty, though they may be full of other things; as Mud, and Sand, and Stones. So the best things of this World, are but empty things; because they have not that in them, that the Soul seeketh after, and that will give satisfaction to the Soul. There is no Satisfaction, where there is not Suitableness. These things were never made for the Soul; and therefore they can no more satisfy it, than you can fill a purse, or a chest, with Learning.

6. Do you use the things of a prosperous condition, with this consideration, *viz.* Of your own Mortality? Then it is right, when we consider, As the brevity of Worldly things, and that they have an end; so, when we consider our own ends also, this consideration, will make us sober in the use of them. 1 Pet. 4. 7. The Apostle exhorteth to Sobriety, in the use of the things of this Life, upon this ground, *viz.* *The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore Sober.* Where, by Sobriety, is meant, A moderate use of the things of this Life; and the Motive to enforce it, is this, *The end of all things is at hand:* The end of your worldly Enjoyments, the end of your Lives, and the end of the World it self. This is the Misery, that many in a prosperous condition, as they consider not, What the things of their condition are, *viz.* Corruptible, and

and Changeable; so they consider not, What themselves are in their condition, viz. Frail, and Mortal creatures. Some there are, that so use the things of this Life, as if they should, for ever, live to Enjoy, and Use them. The Psalmist telleth us, What man is at his best estate, *Psal. 39. Surely every man, at his best estate, is altogether Vanity.* A prosperous condition is, then, Ill for a man, when it makes him forget his own condition; and it is good for a man, when it holds an agreement with a dying state. *1 Cor. 7. 29. Brethren, (saith the Apostle) the time is short, &c.* As if he should say, You have but a short time to enjoy these things, To enjoy Wives, and Possessions, and all the things of this Life: As you know not, how soon they may be taken from you, so you know not how soon you may be taken from them. *The time is short.* The time, in respect of the things themselves, and their continuance, is short, and the time of your lives is short. If those, that lived in the beginning of the world, gave themselves so much to the building of Cities; it was not much to be wondered at, because they had more time before them, then we have, who live in these latter ages. They, by common course of nature, lived 500. 600. 700. years; but our time is short, it is drawn into a narrow compass; And the consideration of this, will help us to be sober, and moderate, in the use of the things of that condition; and make us look upon Honour, and Riches, and Relations, as things that we must shortly part with. It will help us, to use them with weaned affections, as a Traveller doth the pleasures of his Inn; he standeth not to build himself a house at every pleasant place he passeth
such

seth by; he considereth, he is on his Journey, going to his Home. It is good for a man in a prosperous condition, to have thoughts of his Long-Home; whither he is going. So then, the great question we should put to our selves, is this, Whether our using the things of this life, be such, as holdeth an agreement with a dying State? *Jam.*

4. 13, 14. The Apostle speaketh of some, that would go into such, and such a City, and there live, and get gain: Whereas (saith he) you know not what may be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is but a Vapour, &c. As if he should say, You consider not your own Frailty, and Mortality; if you did, you would not be so Carnally-confident as you are. Remember in a prosperous condition, you are those that dwell in Tabernacles of Clay, whose foundation is in the Dust, and whose breath is in your Nostrils; dwelling in an open house, and ready every moment to depart. Remember you must go down to the Grave, and the glory of your condition shall not descend with you, *Psal.* 49. 17.

7. Do you use the things of a prosperous condition, with this consideration, That they are things for which you must give an Account? I shewed you before, that they have their usefulness, and men must give an account, How they have used them. We must know, a prosperous condition hath many burthens, (*viz.*) of Dangers, Temptations, Cares, Duties; and here is the greatest of all, that of an Account: *Rom.* 14. 12. *Every one of us, shall give account of our selves to God.* By giving an account of our selves to God; is (no doubt) implied; A giving an account of our selves,
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in relation to our conditions, (*viz.*) What we have been? What we have done? How we have demeaned ourselves in our conditions? What Glory we have brought to God? What Good we have done to others? We read, *Mat. 25. There were Talents delivered, and the Master called his servants to an account, how they had used, and improved those Talents?* Some make these Talents to be of five sorts.

1. Those of Nature, (*viz.*) The Members of the Body, and Faculties of the Mind.
2. Wealth,
3. Authority; as Power, and Offices.
4. Knowledg; as Arts, and Sciences.
5. Grace.

So then, the outward things of a prosperous condition, are things to be accounted for, and then they become evil to a man, when they cause him to forget his accompt. Remember; We are accountable to God, for whatsoever we have from God. The World is but God's great Family, He is the Great House-holder, and every man must give an accompt to Him of the things wherewith he is intrusted. We read, *Luk. 16. 2. How the unjust Steward is called to an accompt; Give accompt of thy Stewardship, &c.* Every man is a Steward, and hath somewat, wherewith he is intrusted. Some have the things of the world, as Honour, Wealth, Authority, &c. Some have those things that concern the Body, as Health, Strength, Beauty. Some have those of the Mind, as Wisdom, and Understanding. Now concerning All, there
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is a strict Account to be given. *To whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required.* God expects, our Duties should be answerable to our Advantages that we have in a condition. We find the Altar that *Solomon* made, was four times bigger then that of *Moses*; if you compare 2 *Chron.* 4. 1. with *Exod.* 27. 1. *Moses* his Altar was, five Cubits long, and five Cubits broad; but *Solomons* Altar, was twenty Cubits long, and twenty Cubits broad, Now what is the reason of the difference? Surely this, *Moses* was in an unsettled condition, but *Solomon* in a peaceable and flourishing Estate. And God expects, that our duties and services should be answerable to our worldly advantages. Let me tell you, this consideration of an account you have to give, will keep you humble in a prosperous condition; will put you upon improving the things of your condition, for the glory of God, the good of others, and your own benefit; considering, they are things you are to give an Account of.

Thus for the second thing, whereby a Judgment is to be made of a Prosperous Condition, Whether it be good for a man in this Life.

III. Then is Prosperity good for a man in this life, When it doth not make him to forget the Afflictions of *Joseph*. It is then Evil, when our Prosperity makes us to forget those that are in Adversity. The Lord speaketh of such, *Amos* 6. 1. *They were at ease in Sion*; ver. 4. *They did lie upon beds of Ivory. They did eat the Lambs out of the Flock: They did Chaunt to the sound of the Viol, (they had their Musick too.) Ver. 6. They drank Wine in Bowls,* (they

(they had their Wine too, and that in Abundance.) *And they did Anoint themselves with the chief Oynments,* (they had their precious Oynments, so that nothing was wanting.) Now, What is their Sin all this while? Why this, *They were not grieved for the Afflictions of Joseph.* This was their Sin; Their Prosperity had taken away the sympathy, and fellow-feeling they ought to have had of Joseph's Afflictions. Their Fulness, made them to forget his Wants. Let me tell you, Prosperity is evil for a man, when it makes him forget the Afflictions of others. It was Evil for those, That they were at ease in Sion; and, that they had their *Ivory Beds to lie upon,* and their *Lambs and Calves to feed on;* and their *Musick to delight them in;* but were not *mindful of Joseph's Afflictions:* And therefore see how they are threatned, *ver. 7. They shall go captive with the first that go captive: i. e. God would first fall upon them.* It is said of Dives, *Luke 16. 19.* That he was *cloathed in Purple, and fared Deliciously every day:* But *Lazarus* could not partake of so much, as the *crumbs that fell from his Table.* We may safely conclude, That, that mans Abundance is naught for him, that makes him to forget the Wants of others: That, that mans Prosperity is naught for him, that makes him to forget the Afflictions of others: That, that mans Ease is evil for him, that makes him to forget the Troubles, and Disquiets of others. *Heb. 13. 3.* The Apostle chargeth them, that they should *remember those that are in Bonds, as if they were bound with them.* q. d. Though you are at Liberty, yet let not your Liberty destroy that sympathy, and fellow-feeling, you ought to have of your brethrens Bonds, and
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Miseries. This sympathy the Apostle calleth for, *Rom. 12. 15. Rejoyce with them that rejoyce, and weep with them that weep.* q. d. What ever a mans particular condition is, It should not hinder him from sympathising with others in their conditions. *Rejoyce with them that rejoyce.* As if he should say, It may be your particular condition is Sad, and you have cause to Weep, in respect of your own particular; yet if it go well with the Publick, and the people of God in general, You ought to rejoyce in their rejoycings. *And then (saith the Apostle) weep with them that weep.* q. d. It may be, your particular condition may be a Rejoycing-condition, nothing aileth you, you want for nothing; Yet, if the Church, and People of God, be in a sad condition; You are to Weep with them. *Job* telleth us, he did so in the dayes of his Prosperity, *Job 30. 25. Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my Soul grieved for the Poor?* This he did, when he had no cause to Weep in relation to himself, his condition being a Rejoycing condition. You may see, how, in the height of his prosperity, he did sympathize with those that were in Affliction, *Chap. 29. ver. 6, 12, 13, 15, 16.*

To close this, Let our Condition be never so Prosperous, we ought to Bleed in others Wounds, and to be Afflicted in all, wherein they are Afflicted.

Thus I have finished the First thing, *viz.*
How a man may know, Whether a
Prosperous condition be Good for
him in this Life.

CHAP. XL.

2 **I** Now come to shew you, How a man may make a Judgment of an Adverse and an Afflicted condition; whether it be good for him in this life. For let me tell you, That as it is not good for all, that they have Prosperity; so neither is it good for all, that they are Afflicted.

Now, that you may know, whether an Afflicted condition be good for you, Consider this.

I. In General, I shall mind you of what I have before said, (*viz.*) That he that will make a judgment of his condition, must first make a judgment of himself. So that, to you that are in an Afflicted condition, I have two questions to put.

1. What you do in your condition?
2. What you make of your condition?

1. When God puts you into an Afflicted condition, What do you do in that condition? What is your carriage, and behaviour in the condition? Is it such, as becometh such providences and dispensations? Doth your behaviour become your condition?

Quest. You will ask, What is a man to do in an Afflicted condition, that he may be able to make a judgment of it, Whether it be good for him?

Answ. Do you do the work of your condition,
and

and perform the duties of your condition? Then it is good for you.

Quest. But then you will ask, What is the work, and what are the duties, that he is to do in an Afflicted condition?

Ans. I shall shew you that, in some Particulars.

1. This he is to do, To endeavour the finding out of this, (*viz.*) What every Affliction comes in order to. When God putteth us into an Afflicted condition, it is in order to somewhat; and it is our duty, to search out the mind and meaning of God in it. Some there are, that walk up and down (as I may say) in that condition, without ever inquiring, For what end it is they are Afflicted. As those, *Isa. 5. 12.* *They regarded not the work of the Lord, nor the operations of his Hands.* We must know, Afflictions are some of God's Operations. As it is God that bringeth a man and his comforts together, so a man and his crosses; and every cross cometh in order to somewhat. The Refiner kindleth his fire in his Furnace, in order to the refining of his Mettal. The Physitian giveth Physick in order to Health. Remember, Every Affliction, is in order to somewhat. It cometh with a message from God. Now, our great work is to find out, what the Message is, Affliction bringeth. When a man brings us Letters, we do not look on the back side only, and the superscription, but we look upon what is contained within, and what they import. So it is in respect of Afflictions, They bring us (as I may say) Letters from God, and a Message, in order to somewhat. The thing we have to do, in an Affliction, is, not only to look upon the endoriment, and outside of the Affliction; but

but we must break it up, and see what is written within. I told you formerly, We must go to God to know the meaning of a condition; *Dan. 5. 5.* We read of a *hand writing, and the King, and all were troubled, to know the meaning of what was written.* In an Afflicted condition, there is a hand-writing upon it. The great thing we have to do, is, to enquire what is the meaning of it, and for what end the Affliction cometh. Thus it is with many in Affliction; they never inquire after the meaning of an Affliction; though it cometh with Letters and Messages; yet (as I may say) they put them in their pocket, as *Cæsar* did those Letters that forewarned him of his Death, when he was going to the Senate. *Plutarch*, telleth of the Governour of *Thebes*, when a Letter was sent to him from *Athens*, to discover a Plot that was against him, which was that night to be Executed; and the Messenger told him, that the Matter, contained in the Letter, was of high Concernment, and that he must read the Letter presently; His Answer was, *Weighty matters for to morrow*, and that night he was Slain. Thus, some never look into the Letters, that an Affliction bringeth us, and so despise the Affliction. *Lam. 3. 40.* the Afflicted are there directed, what to do in their condition, *Vers. 39. Why doth the living man complain?* This we should not do. But then see, what we should do, *Vers. 40. Let us search and try our wayes, &c.* This is some of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition. As the Lord spake to *Josuah*, when the men of *Israel* fled before the men of *Ai*, *Josuah* casteth himself down before the Lord, but the Lord bids him *rise up and search, for there was wickedness committed.* As you may read,

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Josh. 7. 10. Where the Lord sheweth him, what was his duty, (*viz.*) *To search out the sin, for which that defeat came.*

2. This is another thing we are to do in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) To set in, and joyn with the Affliction, and to further it in the work for which it is sent. We must do by Afflictions, as we do by Physick; we do not only take Physick, but we also joyn with it, to further it in it's working; we keep our Chamber, we take Broth, we forbear Studying and Working; and all this is to further it's working. Afflictions, are Physick that God giveth us: and then it is right, when we joyn with the Physick, and further and help it in it's Operation. When a Physitian administ'reth Physick, to a diseased Patient, there are three things considerable, (*viz.*) The Physitian, the Patient, and the Disease. And where any two of these joyn together, down goeth the third. If the Physitian and the Patient joyn together, down goeth the Disease; if the Physitian and the Disease joyn together, down goeth the Patient; if the Patient and the Disease joyn together, down goeth the Physitian. So it is in respect of an Afflicted Condition: There is the Patient, the Physick, and the Disease. Now what is the reason, that the Physick of Affliction doth some persons no good? Surely this, The Patient and the Disease joyn together. This the Prophet telleth us in the case of *Babylon, Jer. 51. 9.* *We would have healed Babylon, but she would not be healed.* Where you find the Patient, taking part with the Disease. Thus, many in an Afflicted Condition, take part with the Disease, and not with the Physick. Affliction cometh, to set mens hearts

hearts and the world, men's hearts and their lusts, at greater distance; but here is the misery, that most men take part with their Lusts, and not with their Afflictions, to further them in the work for which they are sent. They do, in respect of the Rod, as they do in respect of the Word. When they should take part with the Word, against their Sins; they take part with their Sins against the Word: So, when they should take part with the Rod, against their Lusts, they take part with their Lusts, against the Rod. Thus did those, *Isa. 1. 5. Jer. 5. 3.* They joyned with the Disease, and did all they could to obstruct the operation, and working of the Physick of Affliction. This (as I may say) is a crossing our Crosses, and afflicting our Afflictions; when we hinder them in their working. And this speaks an Afflicted condition evil for a man in this life. It is said of *Abaz*, That *in his Affliction, he transgressed more and more*; This is naught.

3. This is another work of an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) to eye our Passions and Affections, more than our Afflictions. To have an eye upon our hearts, more then upon our hurts. Some, when they are in an Afflicted condition, spend all their time in poring upon their afflictions, as though that were the only work of their condition: whereas the great work they have to do, is, to eye their own hearts and spirits. Some look altogether without, when they should look within. It is our own passions in an Afflicted condition, that are our greatest Affliction. If the house within be kept dry, we need not much to care, what tempests are without. We many times complain of that, that is without us; when indeed, the cause is within us. As we see it

is with a sick man, he complaineth of the uneasiness of the Stool he sits upon, of the Bed he lieth upon, of the unfavoriness of the Meat he eats; when the cause is inward. Were but his ill-humours removed, and purged away, the same Stool, and Bed, and Meat, would content him. When God puts men into an Afflicted condition, the reason why to some it is so troublesome, is, from within, from their own spirits and dispositions. If they could but subdue their passions, and bound their spirits, the condition would be well enough. Poring upon Afflictions, is like a mans poring upon rough and tempestuous Waters, which makes his head giddy, and himself Sea-sick: So it is with some, they do but distemper themselves, by looking altogether upon their Afflictions. Thus it was with *Job*, (*Job* 2.) You find him poring upon his Afflictions. And then see what the effect was, *Chap.* 3. *he opened his mouth, and fell a cursing the day of his birth.* Satan indeed thought to make him fall a cursing his God, but he was deceived; yet he fell to cursing the day of his birth, which was too-much. The great work a Governour of a City hath to do, when he heareth that the Country about him are up in Arms against him, is, to look to the Town within, to see that there be no tumults and risings within. It is good for us in a day of Affliction, to look to this, that our passions do not raise a Mutiny. It was the saying of a Heathen, *Intus si resce, ne labores*, Thou need'st not trouble thy self, if all be well within.

4. This is another work of an Afflicted Condition, (*viz.*) To eye our Sins, more than our Sufferings and Afflictions. Many in an Afflicted condition,

tion, eye their Afflictions, but not their Sins. They look upon what God doth against them, but consider not, what they have done against Him; which if they did, it would make them complain more of their sins, then of their sorrows. It would turn their tears into another Channel; and cause them to spend those tears upon their Sins, that they spend upon Afflictions. *Lam. 3. 39. Why doth the living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?* In their Afflicted Condition, they were full of complaints, as we see, *Vers. 2, 3. &c.* But here the Prophet giveth a check to them, *q. d.* We complain of our Afflictions; our eyes are altogether upon our Sufferings; Oh, but consider, *Man suffereth for his Sin.* We should eye our Sins; more then our Sufferings. *Psal. 51. 3. David saith, his sin was ever before him.* It is thus with some in an Afflicted Condition, that their Sufferings are ever before them, and not their Sins. When God Afflicts them, they can say, We are the persons that feel Affliction from God: but consider not, how they have sinned against God. The good of the consideration of our sins in an Afflicted Condition, hath these benefits attending it.

1. It will make us Justify God in all our Afflictions. *To acknowledge that all his ways are equal, and that he is righteous in all that he hath brought upon us,* *Dan. 9. 14.* There is an expression of *Eliphaz,* *Job 4. 17. Shall mortal man be just with God?* There is a principle of pride in every man by nature, which is apt to shew it self in the lowest condition: so that we are apt to have better thoughts of our selves, then of God himself; and to

think, We are more just then God, when he layeth Affliction on us. Thus those, Ezek. 33. 20. They said, *The way of the Lord was unequal*. It was from looking only upon His wayes, and dealings with them, without considering their own wayes, and how They had dealt with him.

2. As it will help us to clear Gods Justice, so to admire his Mercy, in that he doth punish and afflict us, less then our iniquities do deserve. As the confession is, *Ezra 9. 13.* They had been in captivity 70. years, and yet though their captivity were long, they saw cause why they should admire the Mercy of God towards them. Looking upon their sins, they saw their Sufferings were less then they did deserve.

3. This will help us to Adore the Wisdom of God, in making Afflictions to become cures of, and remedies against, Sin. Afflictions at first came in as punishments for sin. While we look only upon our Afflictions, we discern not the wisdom of God in sending them, and ordering them for our good; but when we eye our Sins, as well as our Afflictions, then we find, they are sent to cure the Soul of some disease, as pride, and worldliness, &c. This will put a man upon putting this question to himself, Doth not this Affliction come to cure, and kill my corruptions? Hath not the Lord sent it to take me off the creature, and to imbitter it more to me? Hath not God done this to cure the Tympany of Pride, or the Dropsy of Covetousness, or some Creature-Surfet? And hereupon a man falls upon admiring, and adoring the Wisdom of God, in making Afflictions, Cures for our Corruptions.

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4. Eying Sins as well as Afflictions, will help us to possess our Souls in patience, and to suppress all risings and smoakings of passion, to which we are subject in a day of Affliction. And this it will do, by giving us to see that our Afflictions are less then our iniquities do deserve; and then there is great reason we should bear them patiently, when we know we have deserved greater. Why should he not patiently endure the akeing of teeth, that knowes he hath deserved the gnashing of teeth? and the burning of a feaver, when he knoweth he hath deserved Burning in Hell? This will help to make us patient, when we lose a comfort, (*viz.*) the consideration of this, that we have forfeited all our comforts, and deserve to be deprived of all.

5. Eying our Sins as well as our Afflictions, will make the burthen of Affliction much the easier, and leighter. What is the cause that to some, Afflictions are so heavy? It is, because their sin is so leight to them. Remember this, The heavier we find our Sins to be, the higher we shall find our Afflictions to be. Affliction must needs be heavy to those, who eye nothing but Affliction. When we compare Evils of Suffering, with Evils of Sinning, we shall find them to be leight, although they be never so great. The reason why many complain of the burthen of their Affliction, is, because Sin is no burthen to them. VVhere Sin is found to be heavy, Affliction will be found to be leight.

Thus for the fourth thing we have to do in an Afflicted condition.

5. We are in an Afflicted Condition to do this, (*viz.*) To keep our hearts open, and enlarged, in the midst of outward straitnings. Afflictions are straitnings. As God dealeth with Nations, *Job* 12. 23. *He enlargeth them, and straitneth them again.* So he dealeth oftentimes with particular persons. And afflictions are their straitnings. God bindeth up the face of our Comforts. As the expression is in *Job*, that *by the frost, he bindeth up the face of the waters*: So by the Frost of Affliction, he bindeth up the face of our Comforts. Our work then is, To keep our hearts thawed, and open, when our outwards are as it were Frozen up. It is our work to see, That in the mid'st of our outward straitnings, our hearts be not straitned towards God. It must be our work to keep our hearts open, when the Lord shuts us up by Affliction. Gods Afflicting, is called Gods shutting up, *Deut.* 32. 30. *Except the Lord had shut them up.* Sometimes a man and his comforts walke together. God sometimes turns a man loose among his Comforts, to walk at large in the enjoyment of them. And then sometimes the Lord separates between a man and his comforts, and buildeth a wall between them, that they cannot come at one another. Thus the Church complaineth, *Lam.* 3. 17. *Thou hast removed my soul far from peace.* And again, *Lam.* 3. 5. *He hath builded against me, and compassed me about with gall and travel.* And *Vers.* 7. *He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out.* Here the Church complaineth of her shuttings up by Affliction. There is a double hedg that God makes about a man, (*viz.*) an hedg of Protection, that no Evil can come

come at him; (Thus he did about *Job*.) And then a hedge of Affliction, that no Good can come at a man, *This is a hedge of Thorns*. Thus the Church complaineth, *Lam. 3. 9. He hath enclosed my wayes with hewen Stone*. She was shut up with such a Wall which speaks strong and impregnable Afflictions. Now the work we have to do, is, To see that in the mid'st of our shuttings up, our hearts be not shut up towards God. *Jam. 5. 13. If any be Afflicted, let him pray*. Where the Apostle sheweth what is to be our work in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) Prayer. Several Conditions, have their severall Duties. In Prosperity, we are to give Thanks; in Adversity, we are to Pray. *Eliphaz* charged *Job*, *Job 15. 4. That in the day of his Affliction, he did restrain prayer before God*; That he had inward restraints, when he was under outward restraints. It is our work in an Afflicted Condition, to watch against that. Prayer is the Duty that is proper for an Afflicted Condition, and that suits with such providences. And this is some of the work we are to do in that condition, (*viz.*) to Pray. We read, *Isa. 26. 16. In trouble they have visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them*. It is *Calvin's* opinion, that there the Prophet sheweth, what was the behaviour of Gods People, and what they did in the day of their affliction and trouble, (*viz.*) they did Visit the Lord; and so shewed the confidence they had in God. *q. d.* Lord, whereas Afflictions drive others from thee, and set them at a further distance; yet thy people draw nearer to thee, and seek the more after thee. Here is the work in an Afflicted Condition,
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To visit God, and to poure out a Prayer before Him. Afflictions are God's Visitations, and when God visiteth us with his Afflictions, we should visit Him with our Supplications. When He poureth forth our Comforts, and emptieth us of them, (for so God's Afflicting is called, a pouring out) it's then our Duty to pour out a Prayer before Him. *David made this the work of his condition, Psal. 142. 2. I poured out my complaint before him, I shewed him my trouble. So Psal. 18. 6. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cryed to my God.* And this the Lord calleth for, as that which we are to do in an Afflicted condition. *Psal. 50. 15. Call upon me in the day of trouble.* It is some ease to us, when a trouble falls upon us, that we have some friend to repair to, into whose bosom we may pour out our complaints. This is the great Priviledg, that in an Afflicted condition we have a God to go to; to whom we may make known our condition, and shew Him our trouble, as *David did, Psal. 142. 2.* In that condition, it is one great thing we have to do, to go to God, to begg of Him what we need for the condition: *viz.* Shoulders of Patience for our Burthens, and a gracious Improvement of our Conditions. Christians, you must know, an Afflicted condition is then good for you, when your hearts are kept open, when you have inward Enlargements, in the mid'st of your outward straitnings.

6. The work of an Afflicted Condition, is this, *viz.* To keep the Ear open to Counsel and Instruction. Some there are, so taken up with the thoughts of their Condition, that they will not

not hearken to Counsel. As *Marius* the Romane said, *He could not hearken to the Laws, for the ratling and noyse of Armes.* So the noyse of Troubles, will not suffer some, to hearken to the voice of Counsel. And so *David* confesseth that it was his case, *Psal. 77. 2. His Soul refused comfort.* *Elihu*, *Job 36. 8.* sheweth how it is with Godly men when they are in Affliction. And then *Vers. 10. He openeth their ear to Discipline.* We must know, *Sathan* is a great Enemy to the doing the work of our Condition; he endeavours to make us turn our Conditions into Sin, and not into Duty. He doth all he can, to stop our Ears against hearing Counsel and Instruction. Remember, when you are in Affliction, there cometh some Instruction with it. Now *Satan* endeavours to open the Eye, but to stop the Ear; he keeps the Eye open, to look upon the Affliction; but he keeps the Ear shut, and stoppeth it, that it may not hearken unto the Instruction. The best way in an Afflicted Condition, is to keep the Eyes shut, and the Ear open. Not so much to look upon the Affliction, as to hear Instruction. *Micah 6. 9. Hear ye the Rod. He doth not say, See ye the Rod, but, hear ye the Rod.* When men are under the Rod, their eyes are open enough to see the Rod; they can point to the Affliction, and shew what it is. But the great thing they are to do, is to hear the Rod. The Rod hath a Voice, which should be hearkened to. When an Affliction comes, it comes (as I told you before) with some Message from God; It comes with some Instruction, and that we are to hearken to: We should hear
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what God will speak, as *David* said in another case, *Psal.* 85. 8. When we see a flash of Light-ning, we then prepare our Ears to hear a clap of Thunder. When we see the Affliction, we should have our Ears open, to hearken to what followeth. We read of *Eliah*, when he was in the mouth of the Cave, *1 King.* 19. 12. *There came a strong Wind that brake the Mountains; After the Wind came an Earth-quake; After the Earth-quake, came a Fire; After the Fire, came a soft still Voice.* Remember, after the noyse of Afflictions, there comes a Voice; and we should hearken to that Voice. *Psal.* 94. 12. it is said, *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy Law.* The happiness of a man lieth not in his being chastened, but in his being taught and instructed by his Chastisement. A mute and dumb Affliction is Evil for a man; and it is our deafness, that maketh the Affliction dumb, when a man heareth not the Affliction speak. So then, in an Afflicted Condition, we are to hearken to what God saith, as well see as to what God doth.

7. Another work of an Afflicted Condition, is this, (*viz.*) Framing the heart to a pious Submission. To get the heart into a submitting Frame. And this not only out of Necessity, but out of Duty. It is excellent, when we can bring our Hearts to a quiet Submission to the Will of God, in all these Providences and Dispensations. It must not be onely a Necessary Submission. Such a Submission is this, When a man parteth with a Comfort upon this consideration; If God will take it away, I cannot help it;

it; I am content to part with it, since it cannot be otherwise. Thus they submit to their Condition, and yield to the parting with a Comfort, when they see they can keep it no longer. And this is that Submission that some rest in; and think it sufficient to say, There is no remedy. But now there is another Submission that hath more of Grace in it. And that is, when God calleth for a Comfort from us, there is free Resignation of it up to God. As we read of *Abraham*, When God called for *Isaack*, he presently resigned him up to Him. And this Submission proceedeth from Faith, which works a Christian to the denying of himself, and to a complying with God in that, that is seemingly contrary to his own desires and content. Thus we read, *Heb. 11.* how *Abraham*, by Faith, offered up his only begotten Son. By a hand of Faith he presents again to God, That Blessing he received from Him. Faith teacheth a man to receive a Mercy from God, and to be thankful; and to part again with it, and to be content: And this not out of necessity, because they can keep it no longer, but there is a free resigning of it up to God. Consider, the difference between these Submissions, is such, as is between the death's and ends of men. Some men, when they see they must dye, and that there is no remedy, do yield out of necessity; and so their Soul's are as it were taken from them. As the expression in the Gospel is, *Thou fool, this night shall thy Soul be taken from thee.* Whereas a Godly man, makes his Soul a Free-will-Offering to God. As our Saviour did his, *Father into thy hands*

hands I commend my Spirit. And as Stephen did his, Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit. It is said, Prov. 14. 32. *The Wicked is driven away in his Wickedness.* (i. e.) He is thrust, and forced out of the world, whether he will or not. But the Righteous hath hope in his Death; and that hope makes him to Resigne, and give up his Soul to God: As we read of giving up the Ghost.

8. This is another work we have to do in an Afflicted Condition, (*viz.*) To lay to heart the Affliction. When God puts a man into an Afflicted Condition, This is one thing God expects from him, Eccles. 7. 14. *In the day of Adversity consider.* In Isa. 42. 25. the Prophet complaineth of Jacob, That when God poured out upon him the Fury of his Anger, and the Strength of Battle: And it had set him on Fire round about, yet he knew it not; and it burned him, yet he layed it not to heart. According to the Original, it is thus, *He did not put it upon his heart.* It is an Hebrew Phrase, and notes diligent consideration of Affliction. Now that you may not be mistaken about this, you must know, There is a double laying to heart of an Affliction.

1. Carnal, sinful and hurtful.
2. Spiritual, holy and helpful.

1. There is a Sinful laying of Afflictions to heart. When a man takes those burthens that lye upon his outwards, (*viz.*) His Person, Estate, &c. and layeth them as a burthen upon his

his Spirit ; whereby a man troubles himself, when God troubles him. When he layeth his troubles without, so to heart, as to trouble himself within; this is Evil. This is forbid, *John 14. 1. Let not your hearts be troubled.* The word in the Original, signifieth such a trouble, as is in water when the mud is stirred up; or as the Sea is, when it is troubled with a Storm or Tempest. As we read in Scripture of the troubled Sea, that it's Waters cast forth Mire and Dirt. It also signifieth such a trouble as is in an Army, when it is Routed and Disordered; there is nothing but Fear, and Distraction, and Confusion. So saith our Saviour, *Let not your hearts be troubled.* (i. e.) Take heed of so laying your troubles to heart, as to trouble your Hearts; to distemper your Affections, and so to blind the Judgement, that you can see and discern things no better, then a man can in muddy water. This laying of Afflictions to heart is unlawful; when they are layed to heart, to disquiet and distemper the Heart, and to raise a Storm in the Soul, to make it a troubled Sea; casting forth nothing but the mud of impatiency and discontent. Take you a glass of water that hath some mud in it, and let it stand still, the mud setteth at the bottom, and the water above is clear; but shake this water, and then the mud ariseth, and there is confusion; and the water that before was clear, becometh muddy. So it is with our hearts and affections, there is mud at the bottom, and when they come to be stirred by Affliction, then the mud ariseth. This we should take heed of, of laying Afflictions so to heart, as to stir up
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the mud of impatiency and discontent:

2. There is a laying of Afflictions to heart; that is Spiritual, holy and helpful; This is a laying them to heart, not for the troubling, but for the bettering the heart. Not for the making of the Spirit more Distempered, Impatient, Weak, and unfit for Duty; but for the making of it more Holy, and Humble, and Submissive; this is a right laying of Afflictions to heart. It is then right; when there is an applying of the heart to the Affliction; to find out what use and benefit may be made of it. When we lay the Affliction to the heart, not to distemper it, but, as a plaister, to heal the diseases and distempers of it; (*viz.*) to heal it's Pride, and Worldliness, and Vanity, &c. It should be with us, in considering of, and laying Afflictions to heart, as with the Bee which alights on a Flower, and leaves it not till she hath made something out of it; even out of the very blossom of a Thistle, she will get somewhat. So it should be, in respect of an Afflicted Condition; There should be such an application of the heart to it, as to get somewhat out of it, for the bettering of the heart. Solomon telleth us, *Eccles. 7. 2. It is better to go to the House of Mourning, then to the House of Feasting: For this is the end of all flesh, and the living will lay it to his heart.* Laying to heart the ends of others, is the making somewhat out of them, that is good and profitable for our selves. It is our Duty to lay to heart the Afflictions of others, much more our own. The Lord telleth *Babylon, Isa. 47. 7. That she said, She should be a Lady for ever, and did not.*

not lay the Afflictions of his people to heart. As she laid them not to heart by way of Sympathy, so not by way of Improvement. So then, to close this, Laying afflictions to heart, stands in this, In having Impressions made upon our Spirits, suitable to the Providence and the Dispensation. We read of *Abaz*, That in his Affliction he transgressed more and more, 2Chron. 28. 19. God brought *Judah* low, and *Abaz* was put to his shifts; he gave gifts to the King of *Assyria*, yet he helped him not. And Verse 22. In the time of his distress, he did trespass more against the Lord. And it is said, This is that King *Abaz*! The meaning is, That the Affliction did not make an Impression upon his heart, suitable to the Providence and Dispensation. To close this, It is then right, when our Hearts answer to Providences, in laying Afflictions so to heart, as to make suitable Impressions.

9. This is some of the work we have to do in an Afflicted Condition; We are patiently to expect and wait upon God; Waiting is one of our Duties in an Afflicted Condition. We are to wait upon God for comfortable Supports in it, and a seasonable Deliverance out of it; *Isa.* 8. 17. *I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his Face from the house of Jacob.* The Prophet resolved to walk dutifully, when God walked strangely. We shall find in an Afflicted condition, This is the Duty, that is Commanded, Commended, and Practised by the Saints in that Condition. It is commanded, *Psal.* 27. 14. *Wait on the Lord and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait I say on the Lord.* *Lam.* 3. 26. *It is good that a man should hope, and*
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quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord. It is spoken there in reference to an Afflicted Condition. And so we find the Godly have made it their work in that condition to wait. *David* telleth us, *He waited patiently for the Lord.* Consider, Waiting is an Act of Patience drawn-out. The Scripture hath two Expressions concerning it,

viz. { Waiting on God.
Waiting for God.

Waiting on Him for Comfort in Affliction; And waiting for Him, to deliver out of Affliction. Thus did the people of God, *Isa. 25. 9.* *Lo, This is the Lord, we have waited for him, and he will save us.* This is some of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) To wait on God, and to wait for God. Affliction is apt to make us short-breath'd. To make us weary not only *in* waiting, but weary *of* waiting. This we should look to, That though we are weary in waiting, yet not to be weary of waiting. It was the saying of that wicked King of *Israel*, *2 King. 6. 33.* *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* The great work we have to do in an Afflicted Condition, is, To wait upon God. I have told you before, It is God that brings a man and his Afflictions together; and as it is He that openeth a fore-door, to let a man into that condition, so it is He that must make a back-door, to let a man out. There are many that would make a back-door of their own; but God is wiser then they, and knows how to deliver them. *Job 14. 14.*
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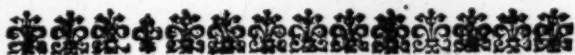
All the dayes (saith he) of my appointed time, will I wait till my change come. And this is some of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition, (*viz.*) To wait till our change come. Now waiting upon God in Affliction, standeth in these two things,

1. In a Silence of Spirit. A waiting Spirit is a Silent Spirit, it makes no Noyse or Clamour, *Lam. 3. 26. It will wait quietly for the Salvation of God. Psal. 62. 1. My Soul, wait thou upon God.* According to the Original, it is, *Be Silent before God.* Where there is waiting upon God, there is no murmuring; There are no impatient expressions; There is a deep silence of the Soul in respect of passion, though not in respect of Prayer. There is a speaking to God, but not against God. A waiting Soul, is a praying, but not a passionate Soul. Remember; When God's hand is upon our Backs, our hands should be upon our Mouths.
2. In a sweet Submission of Spirit to God, waiting God's time for Deliverance. There is our time, and there is God's time. As Christ told *Mary, Mine hour is not yet come.* This is Waiting, to stay the Lords leisure, and to wait His time. It was wickedly spoken by that King of *Israel*, Who said, *This evil is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* Whereas, on the contrary, he should have argued thus, This evil being of the Lord; therefore there is reason I should wait.

10. Another work of an Afflicted Condition; is this, To make all out of God, that we need in that condition. Living on God, and living by Faith, are some of the great Duties that concern that Condition, *Isa. 50. 10. Is there any that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him stay himself upon his God.* While we are in a prosperous condition, we have Creature-props and stayes, and we are too apt to stay our selves upon them: And therefore the Lord pulleth them away, to make us stay our selves upon Him. As the Lord speaks, *Isa. 3. 1. Behold, I take away the stay and the staff, &c.* The Church, in the day of her Affliction, made all out of God, *Mic. 7. 8. Though I sit in darkness, yet the Lord shall be a light about me.* Faith will help us to look upon God as an Universal Good. We know there are many particular things, and (as it were) pieces of comforts, that must concur, to make a mans outward condition good. Our good here below, is a Compounded good; A Wife is a part, and Children a part, and Riches a part, and Health a part, &c. But a man by an Eye of Faith, seeth that God is all this, and more. As *Elkanah* told *Hannah*, *Am not I better to thee then ten Sons?* So the Lord is more to a Christian, then all worldly Enjoyments. The things of the world (though enjoyed in the greatest measure) can never make a Condition comfortable without God: But the enjoyment of God, will make a condition comfortable without them. It was *Dauids* course, to place God as his Strength, where greatest danger was: *The Lord* (saith he) *is the strength of my life:* His Life

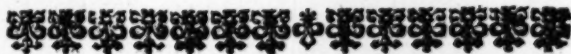
Life was in greatest danger: And it was his way, to fetch supplies from God in his greatest wants. When he wanted a Rock, a Fortrefs, a Comforter, a Deliverer; he made the Lord all these. And this is some of the work we have to do in an Afflicted condition.

Thus we have finished the First thing, by which a man is to make a judgment of an Afflicted Condition; whether it be good for him in this life or not? (*viz.*) By considering what he doth in that condition.



N 3

CHAP.



CHAP. XII.

2 **W**E come now to shew you, that you are to make a judgment of your condition, by what you make of your condition, and what you have gained by it. The great Question you are to put to your selves, is, Whether you are Spiritual gainers or losers by your condition? The truth is this, Every Temporal condition is Evil for a man, by which he is a Spirituall loser. In an Afflicted condition, all will confess they are Temporal losers; They will tell you, they have lost Houses, and Estates, and Wife, and Children, and this, and the other Comfort: But the Question is, Whether you are Spiritual gainers, by your temporal losses. I have told you before, An Afflicted condition, is a condition that may be improved to Spiritual advantages: Although it seemeth a barren condition, yet it is improveable. *Isa. 41. 19. God said, he would plant in the Wilderness, the Cedar, Shittah Tree, and the Myrtle Tree, &c.* He speaks there of making the Wilderness Fruitful. An Afflicted condition, is a Wilderness-condition, and we should see what Fruitfulness there is in it. It is sometimes with conditions, according to what the Psalmist speaketh in another case, *Psal. 107. 34. He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness.* And *Verse 35. He turneth a Wilderness into Springs of Water.*

Water. There are some conditions, that seem outwardly fruitful, (*viz.*) Prosperous conditions: And these sometimes are turned into barrenness; some are spiritually barren in that condition. Some there are, whose condition is a Wilderness, and yet this condition is turned into springs of water, and is made fruitful. Christians should see, Whether they are fruitful in the land of their Affliction. You have a passage, in *Gen. 41. 52.* That *Joseph* called his Sons Name *Ephraim*, For (saith he) *God hath made me fruitful in the land of my Affliction.* Christians should look, what fruit their Afflicted condition beareth, and what they gather from it. It is a condition planted with Thorns and Thistles; but I have told you before, That there is a Spiritual Art, of gathering Figgs, from these Thorns; and Grapes, from these Thistles. God, in Afflicting, intends our profit, and gain, and good, *Heb. 12. 10.* It is our work, to see whether we profit by Afflictions. We can never say, An Affliction is good for us, till we can say, This Affliction is for my profit. And, as *David* did, *It is good for me that I have been Afflicted.*

This having been spoken in General, I shall now come to shew you in some particulars, how you may know, Whether you are gainers by an Afflicted condition.

Before I come to speak to them; You must consider, under what Notions and Names, the Scripture presenteth them to us: By which you may see, What is God's aime, and end, in sending them. And wee should see, whether the Affliction hath done that work upon us, that an-

swers to the Ends and Intentions of God, for which he sent it. *Now that will be discovered thus, by considering these things.

1. Affliction is God's Furnace, *Isa. 48. 10. I have chosen thee in the Furnace of Affliction. Isa. 31. 9. When God Afflicted Jerusalem, he is said, To have his Fire in Sion, and his Furnace in Jerusalem.* Affliction is God's Fire and Furnace. Now, what is the Fire and Furnace to do? It is to Melt, and Try; and Refine, and Purify. Christians, in an Afflicted Condition, are to see, Whether the Furnace hath done this work upon them? Whether it hath Purified and Refined them? They are to consider, what they were when they went into the Furnace, and what they are when they come out. We read, *Zach. 13. 9. God saith, he would bring a third part through the fire, and he would try them as Silver is tryed. Job (chap. 23. 10.) saith in his Afflicted Condition, When he hath tryed me, I shall come forth like Gold* (i. e.) Pure and Glistering: He should come forth better then he went in. This is the great thing we have to do, to see whether we come better out of the Furnace of Affliction, then when we went in; whether we come forth like Gold. The Furnace doth two things.

It { 1. Melteth.
2. Refineth.

1. It melteth that, that is meltable; And we are to see, What melting work Affliction hath done upon us. Some are not melted, because they

they are as stones in the Furnace. Cast a stone into the Furnace, it goeth in a stone, and it comes forth a stone. It is heated, but it is not melted. There are many come out of an Affliction, the same they went in. It is said of *Pharoah*, at the end of every Plague that befell him, That his heart was hardned. He went in hardned, and so he came out; he went a stone into the Furnace, and so he came forth. It is our great work in an Afflicted condition, to see how we come forth, to see whether Affliction melteth us. There is an expression, *Psal. 107. 26. Their hearts melted because of trouble.* We should see, Whether Afflictions do melt our hearts? Whether it hath melted a Proud Heart into Humility? An hard Heart into Softness? A Rebellious Heart into Obedience? *Ephraim* confesseth, Affliction wrought this work upon him, *Jer. 31. 18.* Thus you are to see, What Affliction hath wrought upon you by way of melting.

2. You are to see, What Affliction hath done by way of Refining and Purifying. That is the other work of the Furnace, (*viz.*) To Refine. It is to separate the dross from the Silver; and to take away impure mixtures. When you went into the Furnace you went in dross, but do you come forth as Gold? Some come forth but dross. The Lord speaks of such, *Jer. 6. 29, 30.* They went in dross, and so they came out. *Vers. 29. The Bellows are burnt, the Lead is consumed in the fire, the Founder melteth in vain.* The Lord there speaketh of Himself, as a Founder that hath taken much paines, to little purpose: He had burnt his Bellows, but all was in vain, the wicked were
not

not taken away. *Vers. 28. They were Brasse and Iron.* God looked that they should have been Silver and Gold, when they were in the Furnace. Gods Furnace of Affliction, is, for a Transmutation of Metalls, to turn Iron and Brasse, into Silver and Gold: But they were base and corrupt still. At best, they were but Reprobate Silver; As the Prophet styles them, *Vers. 30. Reprobate Silver shall men call them:* Or as it is in the Margin of your Bibles, *Refuse Silver;* Such Silver, from which the dross would not be separated by the Fire of the Furnace of Affliction; so they came out of the Furnace as they went in. We read, *Ezeck. 24. 12. God had set Israel on the fire, but yet her great scum went not out of her.* It began to boyle up, but it did not boyle out. *Vers. 13. They were not purged.* They came off the fire as they went on. The great work you have to do in an Afflicted condition, is, To see what Refining work Affliction hath done upon you.

2. Affliction is God's School. Now in a School, there is a Rod and a Book: The one for Correction, the other for Instruction. Thus it is in God's School of Affliction, *Psal. 94. 12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy Law.* Whom thou chastenest, There is the Rod: And teachest out of thy Law, There is the Book. This we are to do in an Afflicted condition, To see what God's Rod hath made us to learn out of God's Book. The Rod cometh for two ends,

1. To drive somewhat out of us.
2. To drive somewhat into us.

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1. The Rod cometh to drive somewhat out of us. *Solomon telleth us, Prov. 22. 15. Folly is bound (or riveted) in the heart of a Child, but the Rod of Correction drives it away.* The Rod is to whip Folly and Stubbornness out of a Child; and when it doth this work, then it is good. We are to see, What the Rod hath driven out of us. There is folly bound up in all our hearts, and we must see, Whether the Rod of Affliction hath driven it away. *Ephraim* makes this confession, *Jer. 31. 18. Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; I was as a Bullock accustomed to the yoke, &c.* There was an unruly and untamed spirit in *Ephraim*, but the Rod of Affliction subdued it: As he acknowledged, *Vers. 19. Surely after I was turned, I Repented.* The Rod gave him a Turn, and he was Reformed by it. Our great Work in an Afflicted Condition, is, To see what the Rod hath driven out of us; And whether, when we were out of the way, it hath whipped us into the right way. *David* saith, *Psal. 119. 67. Before he was Afflicted he went astray. David was a Rambler till God whipped him. But now I keep thy Precepts.* q. d. I was a very careless observer of thy Precepts, but now thy Rod hath whipped it out of me.

2. The Rod cometh to drive, and beat somewhat into us. It comes to set on Lessons and Instructions. Correction cometh for this end, To set on Instruction. You have a passage of *Elibu*, *Job 33. 16. Of God's speaking once or twice, and man perceiveth it not. Vers. 16. Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their Instruction: (i. e.)* When men will not hear, God cometh

cometh with Afflictions, and openeth their ears; and setteth on his Instruction with a Witnesse. God's Corrections, are to Seal his Instructions. Instructions many times make no impression, till the Rod comes and Seals them, and puts the Stamp upon them. The question we are to put to our selves in an Afflicted Condition, is, What Instruction the Affliction hath Sealed to us?

1. Can you say, The Rod of Affliction hath Sealed an Instruction to you concerning God, What he is? We read of *Manasseh*, *2 Chron.* 33. 12. *When he was in Affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and then (saith the Text) he knew that the Lord was God.* No doubt but he knew it before, but he heeded it not, till the Affliction came and Sealed the Instruction to him.

2. What Instructions hath Afflictions Sealed concerning your selves? Can you say, We have often heard, What a Proud, and Stubborn, and Perverse-Creature, man is; *Like a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke.* Such a creature I my self am, apt to forget my God, and to forget my self: But alas! I took no notice of these Instructions. But now Affliction hath opened mine Ear; and Sealed this Instruction.

3. What Instructions hath Afflictions Sealed concerning the Creature? I have often been instructed of the Vanity of the Creature, of the Emptiness that is in all worldly Comforts, of the Uncertainty that is in Riches, and all worldly Enjoyments: And have

have been called upon, to use all these things with weaned Affections, and right considerations of their Brevity, Mortality, Mutability. But these Instructions I heeded not in the day of my Prosperity. But now my Affliction hath Sealed these Instructions. I now see what the creature is, and what all worldly things are, (*viz.*) Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. When *Solon* the Wise, came to visit *Crasus* the Rich, *Crasus* shewed him his Wealth, and asked him, Whether he thought him not the happiest man living? *Solon* answered, *Nemo felix ante obitum*; Thou mayest be unhappy for all this, before thou diest. *Crasus* did then but laugh at what *Solon* said. But afterwards, when he had lost the Battle against *Cyrus*, and had his City taken, and was bound to a Gibbet over a great Pile of wood, to be burned in the sight of the *Persians*; He cryed out aloud, *O Solon, Solon!* *Cyrus* asked him the meaning of it; He answered, *That Solon had told him this before, but he believed him not.* We are to see, Whether Affliction hath Sealed this Instruction concerning the creature's vanity.

4. What Instructions hath Affliction Sealed concerning Sin? Can you say, I have been informed of the Evil of Sin, what a bitter thing it is, That though it be sweet in the mouth, yet it will be Gall and Worm-wood in the end. These Instructions I have often heard, but heeded them not. But now Affliction hath Sealed these Instructions. It hath given me to see, The Evil of Disobedience,

dience, Pride, Covetousnesse, and of over-loving the Creature, &c.

5. What Instructions hath the Rod sealed concerning Duty? I have heard, out of Gods Word, much concerning my Duty, What I ought to do; but I was a careless, and forgetful Hearer.

1. I have heard, it was my Duty, In a Good day, to prepare for Evil dayes. But this Instruction I heeded not. I could not believe there would be a change in my condition: But now Affliction hath sealed this Instruction.

2. I have heard, that this was my Duty, To pity others in their Miseries, and to have a fellow-feeling of others Afflictions. But these I heeded not. I did not remember the Afflictions of *Joseph*. I was not afflicted in the Afflictions of others: But now the Rod of Affliction hath sealed that Instruction.

3. I have been Instructed concerning Obedience, *viz.* That it should be close, and conscionable: But alas! I heeded not the Instruction: I was loose, and formal, and took that liberty to my self, that the Word did not allow. But now the Rod hath sealed this Instruction; It hath taught me to be more strict, and close in my Obedience, as it did *David*, *Psal.* 119. 71.

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Thus we are to see, Whether the Rod of Affliction hath sealed these Instructions, *Psal. 94. 12. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy Law.* Then it is right, when with Affliction, and Correction, there goeth Instruction; and when the Rod of affliction sealeth instructions out of the Law.

3. We have Affliction presented to us under another Name and Notion, (*viz.*) That it is God's *Plough*, *Psal. 129. 3.* Every Instrument in Affliction, is God's *Plower*: And every Affliction is God's *Plough*, that makes Furrowes upon our Backs, our Estates, and Families. Now consider, What is the work of the *Plough*? It is to break up the Ground, and to fit it for the Seed, that it may bring forth a Crop. Now, how shall we know it was good for the Land that it was Plowed? but by the Crop it brings forth. If it bring forth nothing but Weeds, or Bryars, or Thorns, we cannot say, That it was good for that Land, that it was Plowed. *Joh. 15. 1.* God is compared to a Husband-man. Now a Husband-man hath two things to look to.

- { 1. His Field.
- { 2. Vineyard.

For his Field, he hath a Plough: For his Vineyard, he hath a Pruning-knife. Afflictions are both these.

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1. Afflictions are God's Plough for his Field; And whoever are the Instruments in Afflicting, they are but God's Plow-men. An Husband-man hath his day-labourers under him: So hath God, some that labour about the Ear, the Heart, and the Inward-man: And these are his Ministers, 1 Cor. 3. 9. *We are labourers together with God; ye are God's Husbandry, or God's Tillage.* And then God hath another sort, that deal about a mans outwards, and those are, Such Instruments as he makes use of, in Afflicting. An Husband-man in his Field, hath some to Plow, and break up the Earth: And he hath some to Sow, and cast abroad the Seed. Those that Sow, are his Ministers, who by their Preaching, cast abroad the Seed, when the Plough of Affliction hath broken up the Ground. It is not the Husband-man's work, to be alwayes Plowing, he hath his time to be Sowing too. As you may see, *Isa. 28. 24.* God's Afflicting, may well be compared to Plowing, and that in these respects.

1. Plowing altereth and changeth the face of the Earth. If you Plowe up a green Meadow, you alter the Face of it: It's Verdure, and Greenness, and Beauty is gone. The Plough turneth a pleasant Meadow, into a fallow Field. Thus Affliction changeth the face of a mans condition. It turneth a *Naomi*, into a *Marah*, *Naomi* signifieth, pleasant, and *Marah* bitter. *Ruth 1. 20.* It is said, in *Mic. 3. 12.* *Sion shall be Plowed as a Field.* *Sion* had been as a beautiful Meadow, Fair, Green, and

and Pleasant; But God by Afflicting her, would make her look like a Fallow-field. Thus, you find the change, God's Plough of Affliction, made in *Job's* condition: It quite altered the face of it. *Job* 29. 2, 3, 6, &c. he sheweth you, how fair and flourishing his condition was, before God's Plough went over him: But *Chap.* 30. He telleth you, what a change it had made of the face of his condition.

2. The Plough overturneth the Earth, and layeth the bottom uppermost. It turneth that downward, that was upward; and that upward, that was downward. So doth Affliction, Where that Plough comes, it hideth that that was green, and turns it out of sight, (*viz.*) our Comforts, and casteth earth upon them. As the expression is, *Isa.* 24. 1. *Behold, the Lord maketh the Earth empty, he maketh it wast, he turneth it upside down.* This the Plough of Affliction doth when it cometh, It turneth our comforts and worldly enjoyments, upside-down.

3. The Plough where it cometh, maketh furrows: And maketh such marks and prints on the earth, that a man may know where the Plough hath gone: So that we can, for along time after say, This ground hath been Plowed. So Afflictions make furrows, and leave marks behind them, upon a mans Estate, and Body, and Family, and Relations; that one may say, Here hath the Plough of Affliction hath gone. Thus it did upon *Shiloh*, *Jer.* 7. 12. *Go ye to my place which was in Shiloh, &c. And see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel.* This was a long
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time after God had inflicted his judgments upon *Skilob*, yet she lay as a Fallow-field still.

The great work we have to do, is this, To see, What work the Plough of Affliction hath done. You must know, Plowing is a relative work; It is in order to some other, and some further thing, as to Sowing, and to Harvest. We are to see, Whether our Affliction have been followed with a fruitful Crop. I have told you before, The Plough of it self doth no good, there must be something else, or else there will be no Harvest. There must be Sowing as well as Plowing. This we are to do, to see, Whether we are Sowed, as well as Plowed. And to see, What Crop is brought forth, and groweth in those furrows of Affliction? Whether it be not weeds and hemlock, as the expression is, *Hos. 10. 4.*

4. We are to look upon Afflictions, as God's Physick, and as those Physical means and remedies, that God useth for the curing of our diseases. As Physicians have their wayes of curing corporal Diseases, by Diet-drinks, and Sweatings, and Purgations: So the Lord hath his Wayes and Means of curing our Spiritual Diseases. As there are diseases to which our bodies are subject, (*viz.*) Surfers, and Feavers, and Dropsies, and Consumptions; so there are the like in our Spirits. It is the saying of one, That there is no Beast on the Land, but it hath it's like in the Sea: So, there is no disease belonging to our Bodies, but our Souls are spiritually subject to. There is the Tympany of Pride, the Dropsy of Covetousness, the Consumption of Envy, the Feaver of Passion.

Passion: The Spirit hath it's Sursets and Distempers. Now, Afflictions are some of those means and remedies God makes use of, for the curing these Diseases. The great thing we are to enquire after, is, What work the Physick of Affliction hath wrought upon us.

1. Afflictions are God's Diet-drink. It is made up with Gall and Wormwood. So the Church telleth us, *Lam.* 3. 19. So *Isa.* 30. 20. we read of the Bread of Affliction, and the Water of Affliction. *Psal.* 80. 5. We read of the Bread of Tears, &c. Physicians give things to their Patients, that may not be toothsome, yet may be wholesome. We are to see, What Operation this Diet-drink hath had upon us, Whether it hath weaned us from the world. There is a Disease Physicians call *Pica*, which is a desire to feed upon Trash: As some Women and Children, will eat Earth, and Coales, and the Clay of Walls. Such a Disease we are all subject to, having a strong appetite and desire after low earthly things, too base for the Spirit to feed upon. Now can you say, This Diet-drink of Affliction hath cured you of this Disease?

2. Affliction is God's *Phlebotomy*, his blood-letting. God's Afflicting is His taking some blood from us. And when God doth it, He doth it in the right Veine. When He takes away Riches, and Honour, &c. then he bloodeth us in one

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Veine.

Veine. When he taketh away Wife or Children, Then he letteth us blood in another Veine. We are to see, What good our Blood-letting hath done us, Whether it hath taken down our high Colour, and our high Looks? We are to see, Whether it hath taken away any of our corrupt Blood? Whether it hath cured our Ranckness of Pride, and Feaverishness of Passion. There is an Expression, *Isa. 17. 4. That the glory of Jacob should be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh should be made lean.* (i. e.) God would let them blood by His Afflictions, to cure their Pride, and all their other Spiritual Diseases.

3. Afflictions are God's Purgations, To purge out of us Peccant and Malignant Humours. They come to purge out of us Pride, Covetousness, &c. We are to see, Whether Afflictions have purged us, not only by moving these corrupt humours, but by removing of them. *Isa. 27. 9. By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.* This is our work, To see what sinful humours affliction hath purged away. How many Purges hath God given to some by Afflictions, and yet they have not removed Obstructions. Afflictions are to remove Obstructions: to make way for the Word to come to the Heart. It comes to the Ear, but the work of Affliction, is, to make way for it to come to the Heart. The great Question, we are to put to our selves, is this; Whether Affliction, hath opened a way
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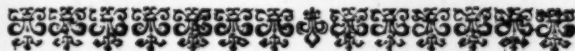
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for Instruction to come to our Hearts?
St. Bernard told a brother of his that was
a Souldier, and a man of a Dissolute and
Prophane life; When he saw him sleight
the good Counsel he had given him, He
clapt his hand on his side, and said, *One
day God will make way to this heart of
yours, by some Spear or Launce. (i. e.)*
He should receive some Wound in the
Warrs, and then he would think of his
Admonitions: And so it fell out.



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CHAP.



CHAP. XIII.

Quest. SOME may ask, Since I know not what is good for me in this life, VVhat Counsel or Direction can you give me concerning Conditions, (*viz.*) for the choosfing or refusing a condition; so that I may not do what is contrary the Will of God, and to my own good?

Ans. For Answer to this, I shall give you in some Directions, with which I shall conclude this Subject, and they are of two sorts.

Some { General.
Particular.

1. General. You must not be your own choosers of conditions, but let God choose for you. As the Psalmist's expression is, *Psal. 47. 4. He shall choose our inheritance for us.* It is good for us, not to be our own choosers of conditions, but to let the Lord choose for us. It is an excellent thing, and that that speaks much Submission to the Will of God; When in respect of outward conditions, we can say, Lord, Thou shalt choose for me. There are many that are discontented if they may not be their own choosers; And say, (as *Rachel* did concerning children) Give me this, or give me that, or else I dye.

dye. Herein is the pride of man seen, That he must have, what he would have, or else he thinks it not well, and is ready to charge God foolishly. Thus it was with *Jonah*, because he could not have his will in the destruction of *Nineveh*; and in the enjoyment of his Gourd; he presently flyeth out into passion against God himself: As you may read, *Jonah* 4. VVhen God repented of the evil concerning *Nineveh*, it displeased *Jonah* exceedingly, and he was very angry. And see, In a pett he would dye, *Vers. 3. Take away my life from me, for it is better for me to dye then to live.* What was the cause of all this? *Jonah* could not have his will in the destruction of *Nineveh*; and so thought it was better to dye, then not to have his will: So far did passion transport him. And then concerning the Gourd, *Vers. 6.* We read, how it sprung up to shadow *Jonah*, and he was exceeding glad of the Gourd. But when the Gourd was smitten, and withered, *Jonah* was exceeding angry; And saith, *Vers. 7. It is better for me to dye, then to live.* Yea, he proceeds so far, as when *Vers. 9.* God asked him, VVhether he did well to be angry for the Gourd, as to answer, *I do well to be angry even to the death.* Now, what was the cause of all this? But only this, That *Jonah* could not have his own will, and be his own chooser. So the great direction, is this, Let the Lord choose your condition for you, and let it be as the Lord will. VVe are apt to be our own choosers, and this causeth much sin and sorrow. Thus we read of those, in *Jer. 42.* After the death of *Gedaliah*, the Forces under *Johanah*, were in a great strait,

Whether they should stay in the Land of *Judah*, or go into the Land of *Egypt*. They resolved at first, the Lord should choose their condition for them; And thereupon they come to the Prophet, to enquire of God what they should do; And resolved what ever Answer they had from God, whether it were Good, or whether it were Evil, they would hearken to it. As you may see, *Vers. 3, 5, 6.* But we find, for all this, they resolved to be their own choosers, and to have their own wills: And the Prophet telleth them, That they dissembled in their hearts, when they sent him to enquire of the Lord. For when God had choosen for them, and told them what He would have them do, *viz.* Not to go into *Egypt*, they would none of his choice, but into *Egypt* they would go. This is that we are to take heed of, of being our own choosers of Conditions; but let the Lord choose for us. So take notice of these moving considerations, Why we should make the Lord, the chooser of our conditions, and not be our own choosers.

1. Now in Gospel-times, we are not under a Distinct Covenant for Temporalls as the *Jews* were. The Law was to the *Jews*, a Conditional Covenant for Temporalls, (*viz.*) for outward Prosperity, and long Life, and temporal Happiness in the Land of *Canaan*. VVe find the *Old-Testament*, runneth most upon temporal promises. As we may read, *Deut. 28. Lev. 27.* And hence it was, the people of God in those times, did so much stumble at the Prosperity of wicked men, and the Afflictions of Godly men; As *David, Jeremiah, Habakkuk*, and others did. But now
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under the Gospel it is otherways. Since the coming of Christ in the Flesh, and his pouring forth of Spiritual Blessings upon His Church, by the Holy-Ghost; He doth not feed his People, with the hopes of those things that are temporal. The *New-Testament* runs most upon Spiritual promises: Only here and there, some Temporal ones are inserted, and intermixed; which (we must know) are to be understood with an exception; and that they shall be performed, both when, and as, God seeth good. They do not alwayes intimate what shall be, But onely this, That, what ever be, it shall be for good. So then, having a Covenant made up of better promises, then those that are temporal, it should make us willing to be at God's disposing concerning temporalls. It should make us say, Lord, seeing thou hast by Covenant, settled the highest things upon me; Deal with me for outwards as thou wilt.

2. A second moving Consideration is this, Our unfitness to be the choosers of our own Conditions. Such is our folly and ignorance, that, if God should leave us to our own choice, we should make a very foolish choice. We should choose conditions, as little children do Books, when they come into their Fathers studies, (*viz.*) by their gilt Covers, and the gay Pictures that are in them. So would many choose conditions, rather by what they seem, then by what they are: rather by the fineness, then by the fitness of a condition. As a child chooseth a Coat, he looks not so much at this, Whether it be fit, as whether it be fine and trimm. If God should leave us, to choose our
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own conditions, we should be apt to choose unfit conditions for our selves. Our choosing, would be like a child's in an Apothecaries shop, who chooseth the most painted box, when it may be, there is nothing but Rats-bane and Poyson in it. We are apt to judg of Conditions, by their outside, and never look what is within the condition. That man that looks no further then upon the outside of a condition, will never make a right choice. He will be of the number of those, of whom the Lord speakeeth, *Isa. 7. 15; 16.* Who were apt to choose the evil, and refuse the good. We are indeed children in making a choice of conditions: Ready to take Rats-bane for Sugar, Hemlock for Parsly, and the Berries of deadly Night-shade for Cherries. As there is need for a great deal of Spiritual Wisdom, to judg of conditions; so also to choose conditions. The consideration of our weaknesse and folly, should move us, to make the Lord our chooser for us. How quickly should we undo our selves, if the Lord left us but to our own choice. We should instead of Bread, choose Stones; instead of Fishes, choose Serpents; instead of Food, choose Poyson; and instead of Blessings, choose things Burthenesome; and instead of what is Really Good, we should choose only what is good in Appearance. Men would choose Conditions; as many do Wives, (*viz.*) by their outwards, not their inwards. They choose Rich and Fine, rather then fit Wives; Whereas the comfort of Marriage, lieth in fitness and suitableness of Spirit. The fineness of a Shoo, is not that that makes it easie; but the fitness; so it is not the fineness

ness of a condition, but the fitness that makes it good. *Plutarch*, telleth us this Story of a Roman, He put away his Wife; his Friends thereupon asked him, VVhat fault he found with her? Is she not Honest? Is she not Beautiful? He putting out his Foot, shewed them his shoo, and said, Is not this shoo new? Is it not finely made? And yet none of you know where this shoo pincheth me. So, if we should be left to chooſe conditions by their outside, we should chooſe that condition that doth look fine, but yet may prove evil and uneasie to us.

3. A third moving consideration, is this, We have a God that is Infinitely Wise, and therefore there is great reason, we should leave the choice of our condition to Him. He made man, and therefore knowes what is best for man: He formed man, and therefore knowes how to frame his condition. *Psal.* 103. 14. *He knoweth our frame.* It is there meant, of our outward frame, (*viz.*) The frame of our bodies: But it is true of our inward frame, (*viz.*) the frame of our Spirits. So, He must needs know best, what condition is best for us.

1. He knows what is in man. It is said of Christ, (which speaks his Divinity) *Job.*

2. 25. *He knew what was in man.* God knowes man's inwards, and knowes what outwards will best suit with him. He that made us, knows what condition is best for us. He that hath taken measure of our Bodies, best knowes how to fit us with a Garment: And he that hath measured our Foot, best knows how to fit us with

a Shoo. And God that knowes our Spirits, knowes best what condition will fit them. *Heb. 12. 9.* He is called, *The Father of Spirits.* They come from Him who is the highest SPIRIT, as from the Fountain. And he is called, *Num. 16. 12. The God of the Spirits of all flesh.* He is the God of Spirits, and therefore must know the temper of Spirits, and what condition will best suite with them. As He that hath the Measure of our Bodies, is the fittest to make a Garment for us; and he that hath the Measure of our Foot, is fittest to make a Shoo for us: So he that hath the measure of our Spirits, is most fit to choose our conditions for us.

2. As He knoweth what is in man, so He knoweth what is in conditions; He knoweth what Effects they will have upon men. As he knoweth our Spirits, so he knoweth what conditions will agree with them. We are so ignorant, that if we were left to choose a condition, we should choose that, that may be unsuitable. It is with many in choosing conditions, as it is with some in drinking Wine, who (as I have told you before) swallow it greedily because it is pleasant, but consider not it's Strength and Operation, and so become Intoxicated and Drunken by it. This sheweth, He is fittest to choose our condition for us; that knoweth, both what is in us, and what is in conditions; and knoweth how our hearts and conditions will suit when they meet. We read of *Hazael*, That he knew not the Operation, that Honour and Promotion, would have upon his Spirit: When he returned this Answer to the Prophet, *Am I a dog, that*
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I should do this? How many have destroyed themselves, by choosing those things, whose Operations they knew not. We many times know the Names, when we know not the Natures, and Properties, of things. VVe know Prosperity by Name, when yet we know not it's Operations. VVe know Conditions as some know Hearbs, (*viz.*) their Names, but not their Vertues; but the Skilful Physitian knoweth them. God knowes what is in Conditions, and what Operation and Work, they will have upon our Spirits; And therefore is fittest to choose our condition for us.

4. A fourth moving consideration is this, God's Sovereignty and Lord-ship over us. He is an Independent Majesty, and we are dependent Creatures. We have a common saying, That beggars must not be choosers. VVe are all beggarly creatures, that have nothing but what we receive from God. VVe live on Him, and depend on Him every day, for our daily bread. Now, to be our own choosers of conditions, suits not with this. He is a proud and sawcy beggar, that will be the chooser of his own almes. VVe must know, God hath put us all into a state of dependency. This should keep us humble, and work us to a submission unto the will of God, and to be disposed of by Him. VVe read of *Pharaoh*, how he forgot himself in this particular, *Ezek.* 29. 3. He waxed proud, because his Land was watered by the River *Nilus*. Thus it was in that Country, They had not showres from Heaven, as other Countries had: For, *Nilus* at a certain time did overflow, and so did enrich the Land.

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Upon this, *Pharaoh* thought, that he depended not upon God, for the fruitfulness of his Country; and presumes to say, *Is not the River mine?* VVe must know, we are all dependent creatures: VVhat we have, was first in God's Hand, before it was in ours: As what we give to a beggar, was first in our hands, before it was in his.

5. A fifth moving consideration, is, Our own unworthiness. VVhat do we deserve? VVe forget this, when we would have our own wills. VVhen we would choose our Conditions, may not the Lord Answer us, as we do a proud beggar, that is not contented with his almes, VVhy, what do you deserve? Let God put us into what condition he will, we should consider, It is better then we do deserve. It is the confession of *Jacob*, *Gen. 32. 10. I am less then the least of all thy mercies.* VVho is it, that can look upon himself as such, and yet stand upon it, to have what he will?

6. A sixth moving consideration, is, To let the Lord choose our condition for us, is the way to have comfort in our condition. There is no loss in it: VVhereas we shall be losers, in being our own choosers. There is comfort in leaving our selves to God, to choose our condition for us. Let the condition be never so uncomfortable, yet this puts comfort into it; That it is the condition, that God hath chosen for me, and so must needs be best for me. A mans condition may be such, as may not suit with his own Carnal will and desires; yet, this is that, that gives comfort to a Christian, VVhen he can say, This is not a condition that is of my own choosing, but
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the Lord hath chosen it for me. VVe read of *Abraham*, when the Lord called him out of his own Country, he went forth, not knowing whither he went, *Heb. 11.* *Abraham* did not lose by doing this, and by making God his chooser of a place for him. To close this; Know, you will be no losers in the end, in letting the Lord choose your condition for you. Remember what *Moses* told *Israel*, *Deut. 8. 16.* That God did all that he had done to them, *to do them good at their latter end.* VVe may be assured, when we leave it to God to choose our condition for us, it shall be, first or last, good for us.

7. A seventh moving consideration, is this, They have always been losers, that have been their own choosers of conditions. Look through the Scripture, you will find that they were, at first or last, unhappy in their choice: And that those, who would have their own wills, had, in the end, no cause to rejoyce. VVe read of *Rachels* passionate wish, *Give me children, or else I dye.* And what got she by it? *She died in Child-bearing.* VVe read, *Psal. 78. 18.* of those, that required meat for their lusts. God gave them meat for their hunger, but they must have meat for their lusts. And see what came of it, *Vers. 30.* *While the meat was yet in their mouths, the Wrath of God came upon them, &c.* I shall refer you, to *Jer. 42. 10.* *Jer. 43. 9, 10.* *Jer. 44. 26, 28.* VWhere you may see, What those got, that would be their own choosers. Remember, this makes a condition a snare to us, When it is a condition of our own choosing. *1 Tim. 6. 9.* *οἱ ἐκλόβιμοι πλετῶν;* They that will be Rich, (*i. e.*) Rich whether God will or
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no: Who make it their aim, and design, and full purpose to be Rich, come of it what will, we may see, what comes of it, (*viz.*) They fall into temptations, and into snares.

Quest. But how may a man know, that he is not the chooser of his own condition?

Ans. In General. Consider this, Conditions are the higher and lower Rooms and Seats, in this great House of the World. As you know at a Table, there are the higher and lower Seats. As we read, *Math. 23. 6. That the Pharisees did love the uppermost Seats at Tables.* VVe are apt to affect the higher conditions, but we should look to this, Whether the place we sit in, be the place of God's choosing? VWhether we did not place our selves? But, whether it be the place the great Master of the Family placed us in? According to the Counsel of our Saviour, *Luk. 14. 8, 10.* It is said of Jesus Christ, in respect of his Priestly Office, *Heb. 5. 5. He glorified not himself to be made an High-Priest. (i. e.)* He did not place himself in that Office. It was not an Office of his own choosing, but he was called to it by the Father. VVe should consider, VWhether we do not take the Honour to our selves, of placing our selves in conditions? VVe read, when *Elijah* was threatned by *Jezabel*, *1 King. 19. 3. He fled for his life to Beersheba which belonged to Judah; he fled out of Israel, and thence he went to Horeb, and came into a Cave. See Vers. 9. Behold the word of the Lord came to him, And he said to him, What doest thou here, Elijah? And so he asked him again, Vers. 13. What doest thou here, Elijah? And we find he could give no good account of his being*

ing there. We should consider when we are in a condition, What account, we can give to God of it. What answer we can make, when we are asked, How came you there? When we are either in a Prosperous or an Adverse condition, and are asked, How we came there? what answer can you give? Can you say, Lord, It is the Condition that thou hast chosen for me; and I am here by thy Disposal and Appointment?

Now, this having been spoken in General; I shall come to shew you in some particulars, How a man may know, that he is not the chooser of his own condition.

1. He that is not his own chooser, is not guided by his own Counsel, but by God's Counsel. He consulteth more with God, concerning a condition, then with his own Heart and Spirit. It is thus with many; when they look upon conditions, they fall to Consulting with their own Carnal Hearts, and Carnal Friends, and to consider, What is for their outward Ease, and Pleasure, and Profit: But say not, as *David* did, *It is good for me to draw near to God.* They ask not Counsel of God, concerning their Condition. *Ezr.* 8. 21, 22. when *Ezra* was to go from *Babylon* to *Jerusalem*, he asked Counsel of God. It is said, *He proclaimed a Fast at the River of Abava, to seek of God a right way for them, and their little ones, and for all their substance.* Where you may see, They would have God choose their way for them. We read, *1 Sam.* 14. 36. When *Saul* made the Motion of going after the *Philistines*, and to fall upon them by night, The people answered, *Do whatsoever seemeth good to thee:* But the Priest said,

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Let us draw near hither unto God. (q. d.) Let us not be our own Counsellors, but let us ask Counsel of God. Now in asking Counsel of God concerning a condition, we are to look to this, That it be,

1. Without Dissimulation.
2. Without Self-Reservation.

1. Without Dissimulation. We read of those, *Jer. 42.* that would have the Prophet inquire of God for them: They made as though they would Steer their Course, by his Counsel. But yet we find, they would be their own choosers. For the Prophet telleth them, *Vers. 20. You disssembled in your hearts, when you sent me to enquire of the Lord.* They sent to enquire of God, when they were resolved before what to do.

2. Without Self-Reservation. Of this were those guilty, *Jer. 42. 6.* Though they said, *Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the Voice of the Lord.* (i. e.) Let God's answer be what it will, we will hearken to it. And yet we do find, That, because the Lord's Answer did not agree with their wills, They would not hearken to it. So that we see, When they made that promise to the Prophet, it was with this Reservation, Provided, that the Answer that comes from God, be answerable to our desires. Thus they became their own choosers, and rejected the Counsel of God, to their own destruction.

2. This

2. This speaks, we are not our own choosers of Conditions, (*viz.*) When Lawful means are not neglected; nor Unlawful means used.

1. When Lawful means are not neglected, for the avoiding of the Evils of Affliction. There are many that do create crosses to themselves. We are to bear those Crosses that God layeth upon us; but we are not to make our own crosses. There is little comfort, in bearing a cross that is of our own making. It is one thing, when God makes us sick; or poor; &c. And another thing when we make our selves so, by the neglect of means.

2. When Unlawful means, are not used to mend and better our outward condition. Some there are that God hath placed low: And, not being contented, they fall upon the use of unlawful means, to raise themselves: And will not waite for the Invitations of Providence till God bid them sit up higher. There is an expression, *Prov. 28. 30. He that maketh haste to be Rich, shall not be Innocent.* There is a making haste to be Rich. Some will not keep the Road, but will break Hedges, and think to find a nearer way to be Rich, by the use of unlawful means.

3. This speaks, we are not our own choosers of Conditions, (*viz.*) When cross-Providences do not discontent us. When what pleaseth God, pleaseth us. When we can say, as *Job* did, *Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we*

not receive evil? It is then right, When what pleaseth God, pleaseth us. There is a known Story, of the answer that a Shepherd returned to some Travailers, who asked him, *What weather they should have? Such weather as I please*, saith he; and told them, *The weather would be such as God pleased, but what pleased God, pleased him.* It is then right, When what pleaseth God, pleaseth us.

4. This speaks, that we are not our own choosers of conditions, (*viz.*) When outward good things are prayed for, and outward evils are prayed against, With submission to the Will of God. Our Saviour telleth us, *John 5. 30. He came not to seek his own will, but the Will of Him that sent him.* And when he was to drink of that bitter Cup, though he had prayed, it might pass from him; yet he addeth, *Mat. 26. 39. Not my Will, but Thine be done.* So *John 12. 27. Father* (saith he) *Glorify thy self.* When he had prayed before, to be kept from that hour, yet he cometh in with this, *Father, Glorify thy self.* (q. d.) What ever becometh of me, Yet Father, *Glorify thy self.* We should Imitate Jesus Christ in this, and say, Lord, *Let not my will, but thy Will be done.* VVe should in praying, either for outward good things, or against outward evils, say, as those did, *Acts 21. 14. The will of the Lord be done.* VVe have an expression, *1 Joh. 5. 14. This confidence we have, that if we ask any thing according to his Will, he heareth us.* This is the way to be heard, when we ask not only according to his Revealed Will, but with Submission to his Secret Will. The Rule for the right using of the great Ordinance of Prayer, is, Asking according to the VWill of God.

God. It is not asking according to our own wills. It is not to ask what we will; for that is to be our own choosers. In prayer; there is a making known of our desires to God, both for the bestowing the good things that we need, and averting the evils that we fear; and, in all this, there must be a submission to the will of God. In the best of Saints, there is Grace and Nature. Nature would have it's will, but then Grace cometh, and causeth a submission to God's will; And saith, as our Saviour did, *Let not my will, but thine be done.*

5. You may know, you are not your own choosers of Conditions, by this, (*viz.*) When you are not too careful about the Issues, and Events of things. It is thus with some, They can be content to use the Means; but trouble themselves, about the Issue, and Event. Some are content, that God should prescribe them the Means; but they would appoint the Success. When we can use Means, and leave the Issue to God, without a distrustful thought, then it is right. We have an expression of *Joab's*, *1 Chron. 19. 13.* When the children of *Ammon* came against *David*, he sent *Joab* forth with his Army to give them Battle; and the Counsel that *Joab* gave to his brother *Abishai*, was this; *Be of good Courage, and let us behave our selves Valiantly for our People, and for the Cities of our God; and, let the Lord do that which is good in his sight. q. d.* Let us use the Means, and leave the Issue, and Success, to God. *Joab* knew, that the issues of Warr, were in the hands of God, and therefore left them to Him. Our thought-

fulness about the Issues of things, proceedeth from a desire that is in us, to be our own choosers. This is forbidden, *Phil. 4. 6. In nothing be careful.* The care forbidden, is about the Issues and Events of things: And such a Care bespeaks a fear, that things will not fall out according to our Desires, and Expectations; and speaks our desire of being our own Choosers.

6. This speaks our not being our own Choosers of a condition, (*viz.*) When we have a Promise, and can rest upon Providence to bring it about, without shewing the way, how to do it, Remember, we are to serve Providence, but not to go before it. When we go about, to teach Providence its way, How to bring to pass a Promise, this speaks a desire in us, of being our own choosers. Thus it was with *Rebeccah*, when the promise was concerning her Sons, That *the elder should serve the younger*: Yet she could not be content with that, but must devise a way of her own, how to bring it to pass. As if God needed her Sin, and her Shifting, to bring to pass, what he had promised. Providence needeth not our Midwifery, to bring to pass Gods Purposes. Concerning them, we may say, as the *Egyptian* Midwives did of the *Israelitish* women, That they were lively, and were Delivered before the Midwives came to them. So, let me say of Providences, and Promises, They need not our help, for their being Delivered. The truth is, we are too apt to mix our Wisdom with God's, and to direct his Providence how to Work. *Job 38. 2. (Saieth God) Who is this, that darkneth wisdom, with words without knowledge?*

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How many be there, that darken providence with their own sinful Inventions? As though they would teach God, how to bring to pass, and perform his own Promises. It is then right, When we can wait upon God, for the performance of his Promises in his own Way; And this speaks, We are not our own choosers.

7. This speaks we are not our own choosers of a condition, (*viz.*) When we can wait God's time (if it be sad), for the change of it. There is an Expression of the Lord's, *Jer. 49. 19. Who will appoint me the time?* Some there are, that will presume to appoint God the time, when He shall alter things, and change their condition. We read, *John 2. At the Marriage of Cana when they wanted wine; Christ's Mother said to him, They have no wine, Vers. 3. But he answereth her, Vers. 4. Mine hour is not yet come.* Thus we would set God the time, of changing our Water into Wine. When we need a Mercy, then is our time to seek it; but we are to wait God's time for the bestowing of it. We are not to set God a day, but wait. As *Habukkuk* said he would do, *Hab. 2. 1, 2, 3. He would get him into his Watch-Tower.* He knew the Vision was for an appointed time, and so would wait God's time, for the deliverance of his people.

8. This speaks, we are not our own choosers of conditions, (*viz.*) When the Issue and Success, and Event of things, doth not discontent us. Of this I have spoken before, and therefore do but touch it. *Bernard* hath a passage, *Quadr. Serm. 6. Enitendum ut sit nobis cum Deo una voluntas; & quacunq; ei placent, placeant & nobis,* We

ought to endeavour, that our wills may be one with God's; and that whatsoever pleaseth Him, may please us. But of this I have spoken before.

Quest. But some may ask, Whether it be lawful for a man to wish, that a thing had fallen out otherwise then it did? As when a loss or cross befalleth us. Whether we may lawfully wish, it had not been so?

Ans. I shall speak somewhat to the Answer of this Question. So, we must distinguish between things that are

1. Offensive to God.
2. Troublesome to us.

1. For things that are Offensive to God, VVe may lawfully wish they had not been. VVe find the Lord himself wishing that, *Psal.* 81. 13. *O that my people had hearkened to me, and that Israel had walked in my way.* So that, To wish, that those evils that offend God, had not been, is lawful.

2. There are Evils Troublesome to us. And about them lieth the Question, VWhether it be lawful for us to wish, whether such evils had not befallen us.

For answer to that: Though in some cases it may be lawful, yet I shall shew you in some cases it is unlawful.

1. When the wish proceedeth from an unwillingness to be under the Cross. We may sit down and bewail the state of things, and so may wish things were otherwise then they are; but then we must see, that

that this proceeds not from delicacy of spirit, and unwillingness to be under the Cross. A Christian should love to suffer, though he loveth not that which he suffereth.

2. The wish is Evil, when it proceedeth from Murmuring and Discontentedness of spirit, with the Providences and Dispensations of God. Then to wish, such and such a thing had not been, is sinful, and a kind of secret blasphemy; When we fall upon censuring God's Administrations: This is to make our selves wiser than God.

Now consider in what cases we may wish things had not fallen out, so as to make such wishes lawful.

1. When they are not Absolute, but Hypothetical. When the wish is only thus; If God had been so pleased; or, If the Lord had seen it good.

2. When it is only by way of bewailing the state of things, but yet there is a willingness to submit to God.

3. When in these our wishes, we mix Faith with our Tears; and, under black and sad Dispensations, we believe that God is good, and good to us. As the Psalmist saith, *Psal. 73. 1. Tet God is good to Israel.* To close this: We are to consider two things,

1. We may wish that, that God wills not, and yet not sin. As the deliverance of a people from Judgment, whom God intends to Destroy.

2. We may sin in wishing, and desiring what God willeth, (I mean in respect of His Secret Will) as the death of a Father's

a Child ; and Husband, a Wife : For whose lives we may lawfully pray, when they are sick, though it may be the will of God that they shall dye. This yet to be with a Submission to His will, though not yet Revealed.

Thus I have given you Directions in General, concerning your choosing of conditions.

I now come to give you in some particular ones.

1. Seek not great things for your selves, but desire only things that are convenient. We are apt to have our longings after things that are unfit for us. We read of those, *Rom. 1. 28. Who did things that were not convenient.* So there are many, who desire things that are not convenient, *Jer. 45. Vers. the last, The Lord giveth Baruch a sharp reproof for this, And seekest thou great things for thy self? Seek them not.* We should still remember *Agur* his wish, *Prov. 30. 8. Feed me with food convenient for me.* According to the Original, it is, *Feed me with the bread of my allowance.* (i. e.) that that is my proportion. *Tremelius* rendreth it, *Demensum*, mine allowance. Some think, that *Demensum* signifieth, a monthly proportion of food, deriving the word *a mense*: Some think, it is *a metiendo*, from measuring. So *Agur* prayeth for his measured allowance, (i. e.) such an allowance as did suit with the necessary occasions of his life. We read of *Jacob*, when he was going to *Padan-Aram*, *Gen. 28. 20. that he vowed a vow*; And see what he desireth of God? It is, *bread to eat, and rayment to put on.* He desireth not Honour, and Riches, and great things, but things necessary and convenient. He desireth not delicates, (as the children of *Israel* did) *to be meat for his lust, but bread for*

for his hunger: If thou wilt give me (saith he) bread to eat. And then he desired not cloaths for his pride, but raiment to put on, (viz.) cloaths to cover his nakedness. The Apostle, *Rom. 12. 16.* among those Aphorisms or Aphoristical precepts, he gives concerning practice, he gives some concerning conditions, *Minde not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.* *Minde not high things, μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονῶντες.* And whereas our Translation reads it, *condescend to men of low estate,* in the Greek, it is only, *τοῖς ταπεινοῖς,* and may be rendred, *low Things.* And so the *Antithesis* requireth that it should be the neuter gender, answering to *τὰ ὑψηλὰ, high things.* It is as if the Apostle had said, *Mind not high things, but condescend to low things.* The same Apostle saith, *1 Tim. 6. 8. Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.* Contentment is the rest of the Desire; having that that is necessary and convenient, we should desire no more. And the Apostle gives the reason, *Ver. 7. For we brought nothing into this world, neither may we carry any thing out.*

Here I shall do Two things:

1. Shew you the Good of desiring only what is fit, and convenient.
2. How a man may judge of Conveniency, and how he may know what is convenient for him.

I. Consider the Good of desiring what is only convenient, and of that condition that is fit for us.

1. It is the condition that is freest from Temptations, and so the best condition. The tempta-

temptation commonly lyeth beyond the line of conveniency. The Apostle saith, *1 Tim. 6. 9. That they that will be rich, fall into many snares, &c.* When men are not content with necessary things, and convenient things; but they must have Great things, and an Abundance; they lay themselves open to, and fall under, many temptations. This *Agur* doth acknowledg, *Prov. 30. 8, 9.* In a Storm, that Ship is in least danger, that carrieth the lowest Sayl. The things of this Life, are things we easily sin in; Great things make us lyable to great Temptations. And this is one reason, why the apostle exhorteth, that Prayer should be made for great Persons, *viz. For Kings, and such as are in Authority, 1 Tim. 2. 2.*

Christians, you are to observe, there are two sorts of persons the Tempter is ready to work upon, and to get advantage of;

1. Of such as are in a High condition.
2. Of such as are in a Low condition.

1. Such as are in a high condition; who sail with Top, and Top-gallant. Hence it is, that our Saviour saith, *It is hard for a Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* It is rare, to find Great men, and Rich men, Good men.

2. Such as are in a Low condition, and are Discontented with it; That would have higher, and fuller Sailes: *i.e.* Better, and greater things. These through their discontentedness, lay themselves open to Temptations. It is observed of Witches, who have given themselves up to the Devil; that they are (for the most part) such as are Old, and Melancholy Women especially, & such as are of the poorer, and meaner

meaner Sort : And one reason of it, is, Their being discontented with the means of their condition. Remember this, Our being contented with things convenient, without seeking great things for our selves, will free us from many temptations. There is a Story of a Roman, that had great Bribes sent him, and other great Rewards promised him : The messenger that brought them, found him at Dinner with a dish of Turnips. He gave this Answer to the messenger, *Carry back your Presents : he that can be content with such Fare, needeth them not.*

2. A convenient estate is, the estate that is most easy. Those are fit things that are most easy; that shoo is the easiest, that fits our foot. It is said of *Abraham*, *Gen. 13. 2.* that he *was very rich*. The Hebrew word rendred rich, signifieth Heavy, viz. *Abraham was very Heavy*. Great things are burthensom, and heavy things; when things convenient are not so. They are attended with a double burthen.

1. A burthen of Duties

2. A burthen of Cares.

1. A burthen of Duties. Much will be required of those, to whom God hath given much of the things of this Life. The more Honour and Riches any have, the more Duty is expected.

2. A burthen of Cares. Great things are attended with great Cares, and great Fears. *Eccles. 5. 12.* *The sleep of a Labouring man is sweet, but the abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to sleep.* The Rich mans care of getting, and his fear of losing, depriveth him of his rest. It is with such, as it is with those troubled with that disease called *Ephialtes*, or *Night-mare*; they feel a burthen in their sleep, and think they have a Mountain lying upon their breasts.

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Know this, A Convenient estate is the most easie; and is not attended with those troubles and burthens, as Great things are. We know, Garments that fit close to us, are easiest for us. A loose garment, as a Cloak, &c. in a windy day, becomes troublesome. A staff is a help to a man in his Journey, but a Bundle of staves is a burthen. From all this, you may gather, That a convenient estate is the most easie.

3. A convenient estate is the safest, and most secure, in respect of outward dangers. It makes us less liable to Envy, and Hatred. The Historian said of the Roman Emperours, That they got nothing by being Emperours, *nisi ut citius interficerentur*; but that they were killed the sooner. Low Trees stand in those Tempests that overturn the tall ones. Great things do but set us upon a Pinacle, from whence we are ready, every moment, to fall, and break our Necks.

4. Consider this, Things convenient, are most commodious for us as Christians. Do but consider, what Christianity is compared to, in Scripture; and you will find, That great, and superfluous things, do not suit with it. It is compared to three things.

To a Race.

To a Warfar.

To a Pilgrimage.

1. To a Race. 1 Cor. 9. 24. *Know you not, that they that run in a race, run all, &c.* They knew it well, for the *Isthmian-Games* were at Corinth, Vers. 24. *So run that you may obtain.* This sheweth that Christianity is a Race: Now when a man is to run a Race, he chooseth that habit that is most leight. Some have lost the Race, by the over-burthening
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of themselves. It is thus with some, They never know when they have enough : And never consider, Can I run this Race with all these cumbersome things about me ? They load themselves with thick clay, which unfits them to run that Race. This made our Saviour say, *That it was hard for a Rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* That man that desireth only convenient things, hath advantage of him that burtheneth himself with things unnecessary and superfluous. The Apostle saith, *Heb. 12. 1. That we should cast off what presseth us down, and run with patience, the race that is set before us.* The things of this life, are things that are burthensome and heavy, and must needs make us run the Race with the more difficulty. I shall conclude this, with a Story I have heard of a Pluralist that had two Benefices : He being visited by a Minister upon his Death-bed, and speaking of his hope of going to Heaven : The Minister Replied, Our Saviour telleth us, *That narrow is the way, and strait is the gate that leadeth to life.* And do you think to enter Heaven, with two Steeples on your back ?

2. Christianity is compared to a Warfar. As you may see, *1 Tim. 1. 18. 1 Tim. 6. 12.* Now, how is it with such men as goe to War ? They entangle not themselves with the Affairs of this life. *2 Tim. 24. A loaded Souldier, full of spoil and plunder, is unfit to fight.* Convenient things are most fit for Christian-Souldiers ; and when we desire things beyond the line of conveniency, we forget that by our profession we are such.

3. Christianity is called a Pilgrimage. Christians are said to be Strangers and Pilgrims. Travellers

vellers desire not to burthen themselves with things unnecessary and cumbersome. I told you before, a staff in a Journey is helpful, but a bundle of staves is burthenfome. It was the manner of the *Jews*, to wear long garments: But when they were to go a Journey, they did truss and tuck them up, that they might not hinder them in their Journey. A long garment is apt to make us fall. Convenient things are most suitable for us, as we are Pilgrims. Thus, you see the good of things, only-Convenient.

CHAP. XIV.

WE now come to answer another Question, that some may Ask, concerning, What is convenient? that so they may know that they desire not things unfit, and unproportionable,

Answ. There are many that hearken to the voice of Covetousness, but not of Conscience; and so are mistaken in their judging of what is competent, and convenient for them. We must know, Covetousness knoweth no competency, but is still crying, Give, Give. The Greek word for Covetousness, is, *πλεονεξία* *an having of more*. When it hath this, and that, and the other thing, yet it never hath enough. A covetous man never knoweth what is his *demensum*, and due proportion; and so, never content. I shall shew you in Four particulars, How you may judg, What is competent, and convenient for men in this Life.

1. That that Nature requireth, *viz.* Meat and Drink to nourish and feed the Body, and Clothing to keep it warm. Among the Rules that Wise men give

give for the regulating of our desires, This is one^d that we should desire naturally, according to Nature^d and indeed, they make it the Fundamental rule. Nature is content with little, when Covetousness is content with nothing, let a man have never so much. It was the saying of *Philip of Macedon*, when once he had had a fall upon the earth; being risen up, and having viewed the Impression his body had made upon the ground: *Oh* (saith he) *how little, by Nature, serveth us, and yet whole Kingdoms will not content us.* Nature is content with few things: This the Heavens knew. *Socrates* could say, when he saw great Treasures carried through a City: *O, how much can I be without!* It is the saying of *Seneca*, *Parabile est quod natura desiderat, et expositum ad manum est; ad manum est quod sat est.* That is ready at hand, that nature desireth, and will suffice it. Remember, Nature is contented with a little, and Grace with less.

2. That that is fit for the Estate wherein God hath set us. This is another rule, given for the Regulating of our desires, (*viz.*) That we are to desire, by our Relation; (*i. e.*) in reference to the place wherein God hath set us. We must know, that competencies are not all of one size and measure: That that may be a competency for one, may not be so for another. We must know, there are distinctions of persons. God hath made some to be high, and some low. As in the world, he hath made Mountains and Vallies; so there are in the world, men of several Degrees, and Estates, and these have their several Competencies, Conveniencies, and Proportions. *Agur* (no doubt) was a man of quality, (some think he lived in the dayes of *Solomon*, others think in the dayes of *Hezekiah*). He prayeth for what was

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convenient for him. Then a man exceedeth the line of conveniency, when he desireth things that are above the State, Calling, and Condition, wherein God hath set him.

3. Those are convenient things, that are necessary for us, in relation to the Charge we have, and for the maintaining of our Families. The Apostle, *1 Tim.* 5. 8. saith, *He is worse than an Infidel, that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house.* Solomon hath an observation, *Eccles.* 4. 8. *I have seen (saith he) a man that hath neither Child nor Brother, and yet there is no end of his labours.* (viz.) he never hath enough, although he hath none to provide for, but himself.

4. Those things are convenient, that are apparently needful, for the future, and the time to come. The Scripture condemneth not a care of providence but commends, and commands it, *2 Cor.* 12. 14. *The Fathers ought to lay up for the children, &c.* As we read of Joseph, *Who fore-seeing the seven years of famine, laid up Corn before hand.* To close this: only seek after things that are more for usefulness than delight; and things whereby you may be made more serviceable to your God, and things that suit with the present condition of times. This was Baruch's failing, of which the Lord telleth him, *That in sad, and evil times, he sought great things for himself.*

Thus for the first. That we should not seek great things for our selves, but things Convenient.

2. Seek after those things, that are, without doubt and dispute, and without controversy, good for a man in this life. When a man seeketh after Riches, and Honour, &c. There is some question to be made, Whether these things are good for him? But there
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are some things, that, without dispute, are good for a man in this life. The Apostle hath an expression; *1 Cor. 9. 26. I therefore so run, as in ἀδύναμι, as not for an uncertainty.* I have told you before, it alludes to the *Isthmian-Games*, where Running, and Wrestling, were the chiefest Exercises. And he telleth you, that those that run those Races, though they run for a Crown, yet it was but for a corruptible Crown: They did but run for that that was uncertain and corruptible; but he; for those things that were certain and incorruptible.

Quest. Some may ask, But what are those things that are good without doubt, without controversy, for a man in this life?

Ans. Though we are not able to tell you concerning outward things, What are good for a man in this life? Yet we can tell you, of some things that are indeed good. Those things are of two sorts:

1. General;
2. Particular.

1. General. Godliness is good for a man in this life, and that without controversy. We find, how much the Scripture doth Magnify and Extol it, as that that is absolutely and really Good. It speaks that of Godliness, that it never speaks of Riches, or Honour, or any worldly thing, *1 Tim. 4. 8. Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promises of the life that now is, and of that that is to come.* This the Scripture never said concerning any worldly things. Profit we know, is that that most men look after. And we say, Those Arguments drawn *ab Utili*, from Profit, are the most moving. Now we see, Godliness is profitable for all things, not only for the life to come, but for this life too; It is profitable.

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1. For all persons: the things of this world are not so. Godliness is profitable for High, and Low; for Old and Young; for all Sexes, Men, and Women; for all Relations, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants.

2. It is profitable for all things: For all the Actions and Businesses of your lives: For all Religious Actions: For all Civil Actions: You cannot Buy or Sell, nor converse with men as you should, without this: Yea, it is profitable in respect of natural Actions, you cannot Eat, nor Drink, nor do any other thing to the glory of God, without Godliness.

3. It is profitable at all times. It is profitable in Health, in Sicknes, in the time of Youth, and of Old-age; in the time of Peace, and in the day of Trouble, when Riches will not profit. As Solomon telleth us, *Prov. 10.*

Lastly, (which is the chief) Godliness is profitable for both worlds. It is profitable in relation to this world. It hath the promises of this life. And it is profitable, in relation to the world to come. It hath (as the Apostle telleth us) the promises of that life that is to come. In Scripture, there are no such promises made to any man, as he is Great, and Rich, and Honourable, but as he is Godly. To close this, The Scripture speaketh this of Godliness, That *it is gain with contentment*, *1 Tim. 6. 6.* Which sheweth, how it differeth from all worldly gain. *Godliness is great gain with contentment.* Covetousness may be gain, but it is without contentment: But Godliness is gain, with contentment: It is gain in the midst of losses: It makes a man contented, whether he hath little or much.

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To Covetousness, there is nothing that is enough: But Godliness, sheweth a man enough in God; which makes him say, not only with *Esaü*, I have enough; but to say with *Jacob*, I have all. Now for Particulars.

1. It is good for a man in this life, to eye more the enjoyment of God, then enjoyments from God. This is good without controversy, and without dispute. Some there are that possess much in this life, but never put this question; Do I enjoy God, with the things that I receive from him?

2. It is good for a man in this life, To rejoyce more in the God of his Mercies, then in the Mercies of his God: Some rejoyce in this, That their Corn, and their Wine, is increased, and that they have goods laid up for many years: This speaks worldliness, not Godliness. Godliness teacheth a man to rejoyce more in the Creator, then in the Creature: More in the Fountain, then in the Stream: More in the Sun, then in the Stars. *Psal. 4. Thou hast (saith David) put more joy into my heart; than they had, when their Corn and their Wine increased.*

3. This is, without dispute, good for a man in this life, (*viz.*) To serve God chearfully; however He serve us, and deal with us. Selfishness will teach us to serve God, while he serves us. He shall have Duty, while we have Mercies: He shall have Work, only while we have Wages; according to the Antient Proverb, *No penny, no Pater-noster.* Godliness will destroy this mercinariness. Sathan would perswade the Lord, that *Job* did serve him only upon that account; but he found it otherwise.

4. This, without dispute, is good for a man in this

life, (*viz.*) To keep God, whatſoever we loſe for keeping Him: And to pleaſe Him, whomſoever we diſpleaſe. Wordlineſs will teach us, to keep Him, while we can keep our worldly preferments: But Godlineſs will teach us, to keep Him, though we loſe all for keeping Him.

5. This, without diſpute, is good for a man in this life (*viz.*) To remember God in all our wayes, and to eye his Glory in all the Actions and buſineſs of this life. *1 Cor. 10. 31. Whether you eat or drink, or whatſoever elſe you do, do all to the Glory of God.*

6. This, without diſpute,* is good for a man in this life, (*viz.*) To Conſecrate all his outward things, and enjoyments, to the Service of God. We read, *1 King. 20. 3. When Benhadab ſent this meſſage to Ahab, Thy Silver and thy Gold is mine: Thy Wives and thy Children (even the Goodlieſt) are mine. Ahab returned this Answer, I am thine, and all that I have is thine.* So it is good for a man to ſerve the Lord, with the things that he enjoys, as thoſe things that are His. We read, *How thoſe in the primitive times, Acts 4. 35. that had poſſeſſions, ſold them, and laid them down at the Apoſtles feet.* So it is good for a man, To lay down all (as I may ſay) at the Feet of God.

7. This is good for a man in this life, without diſpute, (*viz.*) To give the things of another life the preheminence. This our Saviour ſheweth us, in *Mat. 6. 33. Seek firſt the Kingdom of God, and it's Righteouſneſs, &c.* We are to ſet Heaven, above Earth, and Heavenly things, above all worldly things. It is not good for a man, to give the things of this life, the upper hand of the things of Eternity. We find, how Jeſus Chriſt hath placed things,

Prov,

Prov. 3. 16. (viz.) Length of dayes on the right hand, and Riches and Honour on the left. The right hand is given to Eternity, and the things of Eternity; when Riches and Honour, &c. are set at the left hand. We read of *Joseph*, *Gen. 48. 14.* When he heard his Father *Jacob* was sick, he came with his two Sons, to visit his Father, and presented them to him, to receive a blessing from him: But that Son that he brought to his Fathers right hand, he put his left hand on. Thus it is with many, They set those things at the right hand, that *Jesus Christ* setteth at the left. It is good, when we see the things of this life, striving to get the uppermost place, To bid them come down, and sit lower.

Some may ask, What is it that speaks our giving the things of another life, the Preheminence?

Answer,

1. When we give them the preheminence, in respect of Esteem. When they are the things most prized and esteemed by us: As *David* said, *Psal. 84. 10. That one day in God's Court, is better than a thousand.* It is good for a man in this life, to think meanly of the things of this life, in comparison of the things of another life. In *Isa. 40. 17.* When God's infinite perfections are looked on, all the things of this world are as nothing: All Nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less then nothing. So should we make account of the things of this life, as nothing, in comparison of that life that is to come.

2. Giving them the preheminence, in respect of Affection, *Collos. 3. 2. Set your Affections on things Above, and not on the things of the Earth.* It is good for a man in this life, to have his Af-

fections weaned from the things of this life, and wedded to the things of another life. Though we have the things of this life in our hands, yet those things should not have our hearts. Remember, our Affections were made for better things, than things below.

3. Giving them the preheminance, appears in respect of pursuit, (*viz.*) When the things of another life are chiefly sought after: According to the command of our Saviour, *Mat. 6. 33. Seek first the Kingdom of God. Joh. 6. 27. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, &c.* The things of another life, are the things that are primarily, and principally to be sought after.

4. Giving the things of another life the Preheminance, appears by this, (*viz.*) in making the things of this life serviceable, to those of another life. The Lord said concerning *Esau*, and *Jacob*, *The elder shall serve the younger.* Thus many make the things of Heaven, to serve their inferiors; giving the better hand to the things of this life.

5. Giving the things of another life the Preheminance, will appear by this, (*viz.*) The Advantages, and disadvantages that relate to another life. When an Heavenly advantage is more to us, than an Earthly one; And when an Heavenly disadvantage, is more to us than a temporal one. It will appear thus, When we do that, that is to our disadvantage, when the disadvantage only concerns this life, and the thing done, concerns the life to come. This did *Moses*, in forsaking *Egypt*, He did that that was seemingly disadvantageous to him, in relation to this life. We read of those, *Heb. 11. 35. They accepted not deliverance.* The mean-

meaning is, They accepted it not, upon the tearms upon which it was offered. To have had deliverance was a temporal advantage : But to have accepted it upon those tearms, (they found) would have been an Eternal disadvantage to them. Upon this accompt, did the Martyrs of Old, refuse life when it was offered them: They saw a temporal advantage cloy'd with an Eternal disadvantage.

Thus for the Seventh thing, that is good for a man in this life.

8. This is good for a man in this life, without dispute, (*viz.*) So to live, and so to walk, (what ever his condition be) as that he may fetch comfort from the consideration, of what his condition in another life shall be. Some there are, that being in a prosperous condition, draw all their comfort from it. Of such *David* speaketh, They have their Portion only in this life: They comfort themselves only with what is their Portion here, without considering what their condition will be hereafter. It is thus with gracious ones, (what ever their condition be) They can say, My refreshment and comfort, floweth not from the things of my condition, and the Springs below: But from the consideration of this, (*viz.*) What my condition shall be in Heaven, and so from the Springs Above. Thus in the saddest condition, we find the Saints of God, have comforted themselves with that. As you may see, 2 Cor. 5. 1. Heb. 11. 10. Rom. 8. 18. Heb. 10. 34. Heb. 13. 14. Heb. 4. 9. To close this, It is good, when our present condition in this life, is sweetened with the consideration, of what it shall be in another life. It may be, our house doth not please
us,

us, but it is comfortable to think, we *shall* have a Pallace. It is the Psalmist's expreſſion, *Pſal. 66. 12. Thou broughtest us through Fire and Water, yet thou broughtest us forth into a Wealthy place.* Remember, that the Wealthy place, that is beyond our condition, gives a gracious Heart comfort, in the worst of temporal conditions.

9. This is good for a man in this life, without dispute, (*viz.*) What ever his portion in this life be, To make God his Portion. Let his Portion be a Portion of Comforts, or a Portion of Crosses: It is good to have a Portion above all this, (*viz.*) The God of all comfort. As *Jacob* said to his Son *Joseph*, when he was a dying, *Gen. 48. 22. I have given to thee, one Portion above thy Brethren.* It is good in the best outward condition, when we can say, I have a Portion above all this. We find in Scripture, the Saints of God, comforting themselves, with this and that.

1. When they had somewhat else to glory in:
2. VVhen they had nothing else to glory in, or fetch comfort from.

1. VVhen they had something else to glory in, and fetch comfort from: VVhen they have had a large portion of outwards; yet they have rejoiced in this, That the Lord was their Portion. Thus *David*, *Pſal. 16. 5, 6. Pſal. 119. 57.*

2. The Saints have Gloried in the Lords being their Portion, when they have had nothing else to boast of. Thus did the Church, when in a sad condition, *Lam. 3. 24. The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul.* This the Church spake, in the day of her Captivity. You must know, God is the best Portion

Portion. VVere a mans portion in this life, as larg as from Sea, to Sea; were it as Glorious a Portion as *Solomons* was, yet it is nothing, except we have the Lord for our Portion. God is a Soul-Portion, and must needs be the best Portion; VVhich will appear, if we consider these things.

1. *Excellency.* The Soul is an Excellent thing; and base things, (such as the things of the world are) can never be a fit portion for the Soul. God is Supereminently, and Unconceaveably Excellent; and therefore, in Scripture, Great and Excellent things (according to the Original) are called the things of God.

2. *Spirituality.* The Soul is a Spirit. God is a Spirit: And nothing but a Spirit, can be a portion for a Spirit. The Soul is the spirit created, and God is the Spirit Creating: And nothing can be the portion of Spirits, but he that is the God and Father of Spirits.

3. *Infiniteness.* Nothing but what hath Infinite Fulness in it, can be the Soul's Portion. There is an Image of God's Infiniteness upon the Soul: It's desires are Infinite, and so needs an Infinite Portion.

4. *Everlastingness.* The Soul liveth for ever, and seeketh an everlasting Portion. VVhen *Basil* was tempted by the Emperour's Lievtenant, with offers of Mony, and Preferment: He returned this Answer, Give me Riches that will last for ever, and Preferment that will indure to Eternity. God

is a Portion for ever. Psal. 73. 26. *He is my Portion for ever.* He is the Soul's Portion in this life. As David speaketh, Psal. 142. 5. *Thou art my Portion in the Land of the living.* And he is the Soul's Portion in the world to come: As the Apostle telleth us, 1 Cor. 15. *God will be all in all.* There he will be such a Portion as is above Expression, above Comparison, above present Sense and Feeling, above Desire, above Hope and Expectation, above Imagination.

10. This is good for a man in this life, without dispute, (*viz.*) To have Sin pardoned. Psal. 32. 1. *Blessed is the man, whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.* He lets not the Crown of Blessedness, upon the head of the Rich man, or the Great man; but on the head of that man, whose iniquity is forgiven. Pardon of sin, is radically every good thing. VVhen Israel had committed that great Sin, the first thing Moses prayeth for, is pardon of their sin, *Exod. 30. 32.* Pardon of sin, is that, without which

1. The best worldly condition, cannot make a man happy. Let him be a Rich man, a Great man; yet he is not a happy man, except his iniquity be forgiven, and his sin be pardoned. Worldly things, cannot mount a man above the evil that is in sin, and so he must needs be unhappy. It is said of *Naaman*, That he was a Great, and Honourable man, but he was a Leaper; that imbittered all. So, let a man be what he will for his outward condition, sin unpardoned will spoil all. What comfort hath

a Great man, if he hath the Stone in the Bladder, or the Gout? So, when sin is unpardoned, it imbitters the comforts of the best worldly condition. If we could extract the quintessence of all outward comforts, into one Catholick and Universal comfort, yet it would do nothing, to cure the evil of sin.

2. The worst worldly condition, cannot make a pardoned man Miserable. The comfort of a pardoned condition, is such, as is not to be over-topped by any discomfort in any worldly condition. Our Saviour speaking to the man, sick of the Palsy, saith, *Mat. 9. 2. Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee.* Pardon of sin, is the greatest comfort. *Isa. 40. 1. Comfort ye my people, (saith the Lord).* And one thing wherewith they were to be comforted, was this, *That their iniquity was pardoned.* Could we extract, out of all worldly Evills, the quintessence of them, into one Catholick and Universal Misery (As it is reported of *Cesar-Borgia*, That he was so skilled, in the Art of Poysoning, that he could contract the Poyson of a hundred *Toads*, into one drop): Yet all this would not amount to the Misery that attendeth sin.

11. This is good for a man in this life, without dispute, To lay up Treasure there, where things are Purest, and things are Surest, (*viz.*) To lay up Treasure in Heaven: According to our Saviours Counsel, *Mat. 6. 19, 20. Lay not up for your selves, Treasures on earth, where the rust, and*
mouth

~~wealth~~ doth corrupt, &c. Some may ask, But is it not good for a man to lay up Treasures on earth? Let me tell you, It is not good for you, to have those for your only Treasure. They are Treasures that Rust may corrupt, or Thieves Steal. But would you know, what is good for a man indeed, in this life? It is, laying up Treasure in Heaven. There things are Pure, *no Rust to Corrupt them*; and there things are Sure, *no Thieves to Steal them*. It is Wisdom in treasuring up of things, not to reflect upon the place from which we are going; but upon the place, to which we are going. Were a man only for this life, and were this world only, to be his continuing City; then it were somewhat, to lay up Treasures here: But remember, this life is but a passage to another; and it is good to lay up our Treasure there, whither we are going. It should be with us, as with a man that is removing into another Country; He sends his Treasure before hand thither, and keeps no more about him, then what will serve him for his Removal. So, that without controversy, this is good for a man in this life, To lay up Treasure in Heaven.

12. This is good for a man in this life, without dispute, (*viz.*) To seek after distinguishing Favours. Conditions in themselves, are un-distinguishing, *Eccles. 9. 1.* We should, therefore, look after those things that speak distinguishing, and not common, Love, *Psal. 4. 6.* *There be many that say, (saith David) Who will shew us any good? But Lord, Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* This is a distinguishing thing: Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, are not. But the light of God's coun-

countenance is. Christians, remember, that the outward things of a condition, are but common, without the Graces of the Condition.

13. This is good for a man in this life without dispute, (*viz.*) To keep peace within, however things are without. A good Conscience, is a good thing for a man in this life. An Heathen could say, as I told you before, *Intus si recte, ne labores*, If all be well within, never trouble thy self. *Solomon* saith of a good Conscience, that it is a continual Feast. A good Conscience is an Heaven, and an evil one, is an Hell in this life.

14. This is good for a man in this life, without dispute, (*viz.*) For a man to keep himself, in a continual preparation for Death. This is good for a man without controversy. And it will appear by these particulars.

1. It is not good for a man to live one hour in that estate, wherein he dare not dye. Dare you dye in an Unbelieving, and an Unregenerate Estate?

2. It is good for a man to dye daily, and to keep himself in a dying disposition. When the Apostle saith, *Pray continually*, The meaning is, That we should still keep our hearts in a praying Frame. So, when we speak of dying daily, The meaning is, That by daily meditation of, and preparation for, Death, we should dye daily. A Lyon seldom seen, is the more terrible.

3. It is good for a man in this life, To do every thing so, as that it may hold an agreement with a dying condition. This is that we should look to; Whether, in
seek-

Seeking the things of this life, we seek them as that our seeking, holds an agreement with a dying state? Do you use the world, as though you used it not? Do you do every Duty, as if it were your dying Duty?

4. It is good for a man in this life, To live every day, as if it were his last day; and to be doing that every day, that we should be found doing at our last day. Some think that good at Death, that they looked not upon as good in Life. O that men would consider, that what is good at the last hour, must needs be good every hour! As on the contrary, What is evil at Death, must needs be evil in Life.

5. It is good for a man, so to live, that when he comes to die, he may have nothing to do but to die. It is a folly in many, to put off all, till Sicknes and Death come. *Solomon calleth upon men, Eccles. 12. 1. To remember their Creator in the dayes of their youth.* It is a madness in people, to leave the hardest work, to the worst and weakest State. To close all: Let me tell you Christians, That it is said of *David*, that after he had served his Generation, by the Will of God, (or, as some read it) After he had served the Will of God in his Generation, he fell a sleep. How many fall a sleep, before they do their work? And put off their bodies, before they put off their sins.

F I N I S.

